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Honoré de Balzac

SPECIAL EDITION DEFINITIVE

OF WHICH THERE ARE PRINTED ONLY THREE HUNDRED SETS

NUMBER 132

The Human Comedy

SCENES OF PROVINCIAL LIFE

VOLUME IV

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IN PÈRE GRANDET'S GARDEN

At that moment the poor youth, who was still a child, still at an age when the emotions betray themselves ingenuously, burst into tears.

"That's good," said Grandet to himself.

Honoré de Balzac NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

EUGÉNIE GRANDET BY GEORGE BURNHAM IVES AND A MASKED LOVE BY J. ALFRED BURGAN

WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY CHARLES GIROUX, AFTER PAINTINGS BY DANIEL HERNANDEZ

IN ONE VOLUME

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PHILADELPHIA

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A MASKED LOVE
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EUGENIE GRANDET

TO MARIA

May your name, whose portrait is the fairest ornament of this work, be to it as a branch of blessed box-wood, taken from I know not what tree, but certainly sanctified by religion, and renewed, kept always green, by pious hands, to safeguard the house.

DE BALZAC.

EUGENIE GRANDET

*

In some provincial towns there are certain houses whose appearance inspires a feeling of melancholy akin to that inspired by the gloomiest cloister, the most desolate moor or the most depressing ruin. We may say that there are in these houses the silence of the cloister, the barrenness of the moor, and the fossilized bones of the ruin; life moves on so quietly that a stranger would think they were uninhabited, did he not suddenly meet the pale, cold glance of a motionless being, whose half-monastic features appear above the window-sill at the sound of a strange footstep. These elements of melancholy exist in the external aspect of a dwelling-house at Saumur, at the end of the steep street leading to the château in the upper part of the town. This street, little frequented to-day, warm in summer, cold in winter, and dark in some places, is remarkable for the sonority of its pebbly pavement, always dry and clean, for its narrowness and its winding course, and for the peace that reigns in its houses, which belong to the old town and are dominated by the fortifications. Buildings three hundred years

old are still solid and unshaken, although built of wood, and the diverse styles of architecture contribute to the originality that makes this part of Saumur especially interesting to antiquarians and artists. One can hardly pass these houses without admiring the enormous beams whose ends are carved with curious faces and which crown the ground floor of several of them with a bas-relief black with age. On one side are transverse timbers covered with slate, making blue lines against the frail walls of a building terminating in a high-pitched roof, which is bending beneath the weight of years, the rotting shingles being twisted and distorted by the alternate action of the rain and sun. In another direction we see worn, blackened window-sills, with delicate carving that can hardly be distinguished, which seem too light for the brown earthen pot containing some poor working-girl's carnations or rose-bushes. Farther on, are doors studded with enormous nails with which the genius of our ancestors formed family hieroglyphics, the sense of which will never be discovered. Perhaps a Protestant may have made his profession of faith by that means, perhaps some Leaguer thus cursed Henri IV. Some bourgeois may have traced the insignia of his *official nobility*, the glory of his forgotten shrievalty. The entire history of France is written on those doors. Beside the rough-walled, trembling structure wherein the artisan has deified his plane, rises the mansion of a nobleman, where some traces of his crest, disfigured by the various revolutions that

have convulsed the province since 1789, can still be seen upon the keystone of the arch of the stone gateway.

In this street the ground floor apartments devoted to business purposes are neither shops nor warehouses; those who are interested in the Middle Ages will find there the *ouvrouères* of our ancestors in all their artless simplicity. These low-studded rooms, which have neither front windows nor showcases, nor glass doors, are deep and dark, and entirely devoid of ornament without or within. The door is in two parts, roughly bound with iron; the upper part opens in and folds back, the lower, furnished with a bell worked by a spring, is constantly opening and closing. Light and air reach this damp, cavernous place either through the upper part of the door, or through the space between the ceiling and the little wall waist high in which are set solid shutters, removed in the morning, replaced at night and held in place by bars of iron, bolted in. These walls are used to display the wares of the occupant. No charlatanism here. According to the nature of the business, the specimens consist of two or three tubs of salt and codfish, a few packages of sailcloth, cordage, strips of brass hanging from the beams of the ceiling, iron hoops along the walls, or a few pieces of cloth on shelves. You enter. A neat, spruce young girl, with red arms and a white neckerchief, lays aside her knitting and calls her father or her mother, who comes forward and attends to your wants phlegmatically, pleasantly, morosely,

according to her nature, whether you invest two sous or twenty thousand francs. You will see a dealer in racks sitting at his door and twirling his thumbs as he chats with a neighbor; he apparently possesses nothing but a few paltry planks, and two or three bundles of laths; but his overflowing lumber yard on the river supplies all the coopers in Anjou; he knows to a stave how many casks he can sell if the harvest is good; a sunbeam enriches him, a rainy day ruins him: in a single morning puncheons may fall from eleven francs to six. In this province, as in Touraine, the vicissitudes of the weather exercise a controlling influence over business. Vinedressers, landowners, dealers in wood, coopers, innkeepers, sailors, are all on the watch for a ray of sunlight; when they go to bed at night they tremble lest they shall learn in the morning that there has been a frost; they dread rain, wind and drought and long for rain, heat and cloudy weather as the fancy takes them. There is a constant duel between the sky and earthly interests. The barometer makes their faces sad, smooth and gay by turns. From end to end of the street—the former Grand-Rue of Saumur—the words: "This is golden weather!" run from door to door. In like manner everyone will say to his neighbor: "It rains louis!" knowing how much the bright sunlight or an opportune rain is worth to him.

On a Saturday, toward noon, in the fine season, you will find it impossible to purchase a sou's worth of merchandise from these worthy tradesmen.

Everyone has his vineyard, his little farm, and goes into the country for a couple of days. Thereupon, everything being provided for—purchase, sale and profit—the tradesmen find that they have ten hours out of twelve to employ in pleasant excursions, in exchanging observations and comments, and in constant mutual espionage. A housekeeper cannot purchase a partridge that the neighbors do not ask her husband if it was cooked to a turn. A girl cannot show her face at her window without being seen by all the idling groups. So it is that consciences are laid bare and the dark, impenetrable, silent houses contain no mysteries. Life is almost wholly in the open air; every household sits at its door, breakfasts, dines and quarrels there. Not a person passes through the street but he is carefully studied. Formerly, when a stranger arrived in any provincial town, he was jeered from door to door. That custom was the foundation of many amusing stories, and of the nickname of *copiers* bestowed upon the people of Angers, who excelled in this urban raillery.

The old mansions of the old town are situated at the upper end of this street, where the noblemen of the province formerly dwelt. The melancholy abode in which the events of this narrative took place, was one of those mansions, venerable for a century past, in which persons and objects retained that simple character which French manners are losing from day to day. Having followed the windings of this picturesque street, whose slightest inequalities awaken memories of long ago, and whose

general effect tends to bury one in instinctive reverie, you will notice at last a dark recess, in the centre of which is hidden the door of Monsieur Grandet's house. It is impossible to comprehend the full importance of that statement without giving Monsieur Grandet's biography.

Monsieur Grandet enjoyed a reputation in Saumur, the causes and effects of which will not be altogether understood by those who have had no experience of provincial life. Monsieur Grandet, still called Père Grandet by some,—but the number of those old people has sensibly diminished,—was, in 1789, a master cooper in very comfortable circumstances, being able to read, write and cipher. When the French Republic offered the property of the clergy for sale in the department of Saumur, the cooper, then about forty years old, had just married the daughter of a wealthy dealer in planks. Armed with his own fortune and with his wife's dowry, that is to say, with two thousand louis d'or, Grandet went to the district, where, in consideration of two hundred double louis offered by his father-in-law to the wild-eyed republican who was superintending the sale of the national domains, he purchased for a song, legally if not legitimately, the finest vineyards in the arrondissement, an ancient abbey and several farms. The people of Saumur being lukewarm revolutionists, Père Grandet was considered a bold man, a republican, a patriot, one who was devoted to the new ideas, whereas the cooper was really devoted to vineyards. He was chosen a

member of the governing body of the Saumur district, and his pacific influence made itself felt both politically and commercially. Politically he protected the ex-nobles, and did his utmost to prevent the confiscation of the property of the *émigrés;* commercially, he furnished the republican armies with a thousand or two casks of white wine, and took his pay in some excellent fields, pertaining to a community of women, which had been reserved for a last lot. Under the Consulate, Goodman Grandet became mayor of Saumur, administered the affairs of the town judiciously and managed his vineyards even better; under the Empire, he became Monsieur Grandet. Napoléon was not fond of republicans: he removed Monsieur Grandet, who was supposed to have worn the red cap, and appointed in his stead a great landowner, a man of little account, a future baron of the Empire.

Monsieur Grandet laid aside his municipal honors without regret. He had caused excellent roads leading to his estates to be built in the interest of the town. His house and lands, being appraised at a low figure, paid only a moderate tax. Since the classification of his different vineyards his *vignes*, thanks to the constant attention bestowed upon them, had become the head of the province—a technical expression used to denote the vineyards that produced wine of the first quality. He was in a position to demand the Cross of the Legion of Honor. That event took place in 1806. Monsieur Grandet was then fifty-seven years old and his wife

about thirty-six. An only daughter, the fruit of their legitimate union, had reached the age of ten. Monsieur Grandet, whom Providence desired doubtless to console for his administrative downfall, inherited property during that year from Madame de la Gaudinière, born de la Bertellière, Madame Grandet's mother; then from old Monsieur de la Bertellière, father of the deceased; and lastly from Madame Gentillet, his grandmother on his mother's side: three successions of whose amount no one had any conception. Miserliness was such a passion with these three old people that they had been hoarding their money for years in order to be able to gloat over it in secret. Old Monsieur de la Bertellière called an investment extravagance, considering the aspect of his gold a higher rate of interest than that paid by borrowers. The town of Saumur therefore estimated the amount of their savings according to the income of their visible property. Monsieur Grandet thereupon obtained the new title of nobility which our mania for equality will never efface: he became the *most heavily taxed* man in the arrondissement. He cultivated a hundred acres of vineyard which, in productive years, yielded seven to eight hundred casks of wine. He possessed thirteen farms, an old abbey, where, for economy's sake, he had boarded up all the windows, ogives and stained glass, thereby preserving them; and a hundred and twenty-seven acres of meadow with three thousand growing and multiplying poplars, planted in 1793. And the house in which he lived was his

own. Such was his visible fortune. As to his invested capital, two persons might be presumed in a general way to know its amount: one was Monsieur Cruchot, notary, who had charge of Monsieur Grandet's loans; the other, Monsieur des Grassins, the wealthiest banker in Saumur, in whose profits the vinedresser shared at his convenience, but secretly.

Although old Cruchot and Monsieur des Grassins possessed the profound discretion that, in the provinces, engenders confidence and leads to fortune, they treated Monsieur Grandet publicly with such deep respect that shrewd observers could estimate the amount of the former mayor's property by the measure of obsequious consideration of which he was the object. There was not a person in Saumur who was not fully convinced that Monsieur Grandet had a private hoard, a hiding-place full of louis, and that he indulged nightly in the ineffable joy afforded by the sight of a great quantity of gold. The misers were certain of it when they saw the worthy man's eyes, to which the yellow metal seemed to have communicated its color. The eyes of a man accustomed to derive an enormous income from his investments necessarily contract, like those of the libertine, the gambler or the courtier, certain indefinable habits, furtive, greedy, mysterious glances, which do not escape the notice of his co-religionists. This secret language forms the freemasonry of the passions, so to speak. Monsieur Grandet therefore inspired the respectful esteem to which a man was entitled who

never owed anything to anybody, who, being an ex-cooper and ex-vinedresser, could tell with the accuracy of an astronomer when he should need a thousand puncheons for the product of his vines and when only five hundred; who never failed in a single speculation, who always had casks to sell when the cask was worth more than the crop was to pick, and who could store his vintage in his cellars and await the time when he could sell at two hundred francs the puncheon, when the small landowners had to sacrifice theirs at a hundred francs. His famous crop of 1811, shrewdly husbanded and sold slowly, had brought him in more than two hundred and forty thousand francs.

Financially speaking, Monsieur Grandet had the characteristics of the tiger and the boa-constrictor: he would lie in wait, he would crouch out of sight, glare at his prey for a long while, and leap upon it; then he would open the jaws of his purse, swallow a load of crowns, and lie down tranquilly like the serpent digesting his food, impassive, cold, methodical. No one ever saw him pass without a feeling of admiration mingled with respect and terror. Had not every one in Saumur felt the rending of his polished steel claws? For this one Master Cruchot had procured the money necessary for the purchase of a small estate, but at eleven per cent; for that one Monsieur des Grassins had discounted notes, but had exacted prepayment of interest at a frightful rate. Few days passed that Monsieur Grandet's name was not mentioned, either on change, or in conversation

at evening parties in the town. To some, the old vinedresser's fortune was a source of patriotic pride. So it was that more than one tradesman, more than one innkeeper, was in the habit of saying to strangers, with a certain air of satisfaction:

"We have two or three millionaire families here, monsieur; but, as to Monsieur Grandet, he doesn't know himself how much he's worth!"

In 1816, the shrewdest calculators of Saumur reckoned the good man's landed property at about four millions; but as he must have derived, on an average, a hundred thousand francs a year therefrom, from 1793 to 1816, it was fair to presume that he possessed a cash capital almost equal in amount to the value of his realty. And so, if Monsieur Grandet's name happened to be mentioned after a game of boston, or in the course of conversation about the grape crop, the knowing ones would say: "Père Grandet?—Père Grandet must be worth five or six millions."

"You are cleverer than I am, for I've never been able to find out the total," Monsieur Cruchot or Monsieur des Grassins would reply, if they overheard what was said.

If some visitor from Paris happened to speak of the Rothschilds or Monsieur Laffitte, the Saumurites would ask if they were as rich as Monsieur Grandet. If the Parisian answered in the affirmative with a disdainful smile, they would look at one another, shaking their heads incredulously. Such an enormous fortune covered with a cloak of gold everything

that the man did. Although at first some peculiarities in his mode of life gave occasion for ridicule and sarcasm, the ridicule and sarcasm were soon expended. In his most trivial actions Monsieur Grandet had on his side the authority of the *res adjudicata.* His speech, his clothes, his gestures, the winking of his eyes, had the force of law in the province, where everyone, after studying him as a naturalist studies the effect of instinct in animals, was able to appreciate the profound, silent wisdom of his slightest movements.

"It will be a hard winter," some one would say, "Père Grandet has put on his fur gloves: we must harvest our grapes;" or: "Père Grandet is getting in lots of staves, there'll be plenty of wine this year."

Monsieur Grandet never bought meat or bread. His farmers brought him every week a sufficient stock of capons, chickens, eggs, butter and wheat, by way of rent. He owned a mill, and the tenant, by the terms of the lease, came to him for a certain quantity of grain and brought him bran and flour. Tall Nanon, his only servant, although she was no longer young, baked the bread for the family herself, every Saturday. Monsieur Grandet had made arrangements with certain kitchen-gardeners, who were his tenants, to furnish him with vegetables. Of fruit, he raised such a quantity that he sold a great part of it in the market. His wood for burning was cut in his hedgerows or taken from the old half-rotten underbrush on the outskirts of his fields.

and his farmers carted it to town all sawed and split, obligingly piled it for him and received his thanks. His only known expenses were for bread for the Communion, his wife's and daughter's dress and their chairs at the church, light, Nanon's wages and retinning her saucepans, taxes, repairs on his buildings and the cost of his farming operations. He had six hundred acres of woodland, recently purchased, which he had put in charge of a neighbor's keeper, promising to remunerate him. Only since that purchase had he eaten game.

His manners were extremely simple. He spoke but little. As a general rule he expressed his ideas in short, pithy sentences, uttered in a mild tone. Since the Revolution, when he first began to attract attention, the good man had acquired a fatiguing habit of stammering as soon as he had occasion to discourse at length or to carry on a discussion. This defect, the incoherence of his speech, the flood of words in which he drowned his thought, his apparent lack of logic, all of which were attributed to his want of education, were affected, and will be sufficiently explained by some incidents in this narrative. Four sentences, as unvarying as algebraic formulæ, were habitually used by him to solve all the difficulties of life and business: "I don't know," "I cannot," "I will not," and "We will see about it." He never said *yes* or *no*, and he never wrote. When anyone spoke to him he listened coldly, holding his chin in his right hand with his right elbow resting on the back of his left hand,

and formed opinions which he never changed, on every subject. He meditated long upon the most unimportant bargains. When, after a shrewd conversation, his adversary had betrayed the secret of his pretensions while thinking that he had gotten the better of him, he would reply:

"I cannot decide upon anything until I have consulted my wife."

His wife, whom he had reduced to a state of absolute serfdom, was his most convenient screen in business matters. He never called upon anybody, would never accept an invitation to dinner or invite anybody to dine with him; he never made any noise, and seemed to economize everything, even movement. He never attempted to encroach upon others, being constantly mindful of the rights of property. Nevertheless, despite his mild voice and his circumspect bearing, the language and manners of the cooper sometimes came to the surface, especially when he was at home, where he exercised less self-restraint than anywhere else. Physically, Grandet was a man five feet tall, thickset and square, with calves twelve inches in circumference, knotty knee-pans and broad shoulders; his face was round, sunburned and marked by smallpox; his chin was straight, his lips exhibited no curves, and his teeth were white; his eyes had the calm, devouring expression which the common people accord to the basilisk; his forehead, thickly strewn with wrinkles, did not lack significant protuberances; his grizzly sandy hair was white and gold—so said

some young men who did not know how serious a matter it was to make a joke upon Monsieur Grandet. His nose, which was very thick at the end, was embellished with a blue-veined wen, which the irreverent maintained, not without reason, to be full of mischief. The face denoted dangerous shrewdness, automatic uprightness, the selfishness of a man accustomed to concentrate his feelings upon the enjoyment of avarice, and upon the only human being who was really something to him—his daughter Eugénie, his only heir. Attitude, manner, gait, everything about him bore witness to the belief in himself that arises from the habit of having always succeeded in one's enterprises. Thus, although he was apparently of an easy and yielding disposition, Monsieur Grandet had a character of bronze. As he was always dressed in exactly the same manner, the man who saw him in 1817, saw him as he had been since 1791. His stout shoes were tied with leather strings; he wore in all kinds of weather milled cotton stockings, short breeches of coarse brown cloth with silver buckles, a velvet waistcoat with alternating yellow and violet stripes, buttoned to the neck, a full-skirted brown coat, a black cravat and a quaker hat. His gloves, which were as heavy as those the gendarmes wear, lasted him twenty months, and, in order to keep them clean, he always placed them with the same gesture in the same place on the rim of his hat. Saumur knew nothing more concerning this personage.

Six only of the townspeople were privileged to enter his house. The most considerable of the first three was Monsieur Cruchot's nephew. Since his appointment as president of the court of first instance at Saumur, this young man had added to the name of Cruchot that of Bonfons, and was doing his best to make Bonfons outshine Cruchot. He already signed himself C. de Bonfons. The counselor who was sufficiently ill-advised to call him "Monsieur Cruchot," was not long in finding out his folly, when his case was tried. The magistrate favored those who called him "Monsieur le Président," but he bestowed his most gracious smiles upon the flatterers who called him "Monsieur de Bonfons." Monsieur le Président was thirty-three years old; he owned the estate of Bonfons—*Boni Fontis*,—worth seven thousand francs a year, and he expected to inherit from his uncle, the notary, and his uncle, Abbé Cruchot, a dignitary of the chapter of Saint-Martin de Tours, both of whom were supposed to be tolerably rich. These three Cruchots, supported by a goodly number of cousins, allied to twenty families in the town, formed a party there, as the Medicis did long ago at Florence; and, like the Medicis, the Cruchots had their Pazzis.

Madame des Grassins, who had a son of twenty-three, was very assiduous in paying court to Madame Grandet, hoping to marry her dear Adolphe to Mademoiselle Eugénie. Monsieur des Grassins the banker vigorously seconded his wife's efforts by constant services secretly rendered to the old miser,

and always arrived opportunely on the field of battle. These three Des Grassins likewise had their adherents, their cousins, their faithful allies. On the side of the Cruchots, the abbé, the Talleyrand of the family, ably supported by his brother, the notary, hotly disputed possession of the ground with the financier, and strove to obtain the rich heritage for his nephew, the president.

This secret combat between the Cruchots and the Des Grassins, the prize being Eugénie Grandet's hand, was a subject of passionate interest in the various social circles of Saumur. Would Mademoiselle Grandet marry Monsieur le Président or Monsieur Adolphe des Grassins? Some answered this question to the effect that Monsieur Grandet would give his daughter to neither the one nor the other. The ex-cooper, consumed with ambition, was on the lookout, they said, for some peer of France as a son-in-law, who would accept all the past, present and future casks of the Grandets in consideration of three hundred thousand francs a year. Others would reply that Monsieur and Madame des Grassins were of noble birth and extremely wealthy, that Adolphe was a very pretty cavalier, and that, unless he had a pope's nephew up his sleeve, an alliance so desirable ought to satisfy an upstart, a man whom all Saumur had seen with an adze in his hand, and who had worn the red cap besides. The most sensible called attention to the fact that Monsieur Cruchot de Bonfons was admitted to the house at any hour of the day, while his rival was received

on Sundays only. Some maintained that Madame des Grassins, being on more intimate terms than the Cruchots with the women of the Grandet household, might impress upon them certain ideas which would enable her to succeed sooner or later. Others retorted that Abbé Cruchot was the most insinuating man in the world, and that, as between a woman and a monk, the game was even.

"They are neck and neck," said a Saumur wit.

The wiser heads of the province, pretending to greater knowledge, maintained that the Grandets were too shrewd to allow the property to go out of the family, and that Mademoiselle Eugénie Grandet of Saumur would be married to the son of Monsieur Grandet of Paris, a wealthy wholesale dealer in wines. To that the Cruchotins and Grassinistes replied:

"In the first place, the two brothers haven't met twice in thirty years. In the second place, Monsieur Grandet of Paris has very lofty views for his son. He is mayor of an arrondissement, deputy, colonel in the National Guard, judge of the tribunal of commerce; he disowns the Grandets of Saumur and proposes to form an alliance with some ducal family by the favor of Napoléon."

What would they not say concerning an heiress, who was talked about for twenty leagues around, even in the public conveyances, from Angers to Blois inclusive!

Early in 1811, the Cruchotins obtained a signal advantage over the Grassinistes. The estate of

Froidfond, famous for its park, its fine château, its farms, rivers, ponds and forests, and worth three millions, was offered for sale by the young Marquis de Froidfond, who was compelled to turn his property into cash. Master Cruchot, Président Cruchot and Abbé Cruchot, assisted by their partisans, succeeded in preventing a sale in small lots. The notary concluded a golden bargain with the young man by convincing him that he would have to bring innumerable suits against the successful bidders before he could obtain the price of their lots; it would be much better to sell to Monsieur Grandet, a responsible man, who was able morever to pay for the estate in cash. The splendid marquisate of Froidfond was thereupon convoyed toward Monsieur Grandet's œsophagus, and, to the unbounded amazement of Saumur, he paid for it, with a rebate, after the usual formalities. This transaction occasioned great excitement at Nantes and Orléans. Monsieur Grandet took advantage of the opportunity afforded by a cart that was returning to Froidfond to go and inspect his château. After casting the glance of a master over the property, he returned to Saumur, certain that he had invested his funds at five per cent, and engrossed with the magnificent scheme of rounding out the Froidfond marquisate by uniting all his own property therewith. In order to refill his almost empty treasury, he decided to thin out his forests and to sell the poplars in his fields.

It is easy now to understand the full force of the expression: Monsieur Grandet's house—that cold,

dull, silent house, situated in the upper part of the town, and sheltered by the ruins of the ramparts. The two pillars and the arch forming the doorway were built, like the house, of tufa, a white stone peculiar to the shores of the Loire, and so soft that its average duration is hardly two hundred years. The numerous, irregular holes of curious shape, due to the uneven climate, gave to the archway and the side posts the aspect of the vermiculated stone of French architecture, and some resemblance to the porch of a jail. Above the archway was a long bas-relief carved in hard stone, representing the Four Seasons, the figures being badly worn and quite black. This bas-relief was surmounted by a protruding plinth, upon which a number of the plants that spring up in unexpected places were growing—yellow lichwort, bindweed, convolvulus, plantain, and a small cherry tree already of fair height. The door of solid oak, dark-colored and dry as tinder, split in every direction and apparently far from strong, was made solid and substantial by the system of bolts, which were arranged in symmetrical designs. A small square wicket, with iron bars placed close together and red with rust, occupied the centre of the house-door and furnished a motive, so to speak, for a knocker which was attached to it by a ring, and which struck upon the frowning head of a huge nail. This knocker, which was oblong in shape and of the kind that our ancestors called *jaquemart*, resembled a huge exclamation point; upon a careful examination an

antiquary would have found some traces of the essentially comic figure that it once represented, and that long use had effaced. Through the little wicket, intended as a means of recognizing friends in the time of the wars, the curious could see, at the end of a dark, moss-grown passageway, a few worn steps leading up to a garden picturesquely enclosed by thick, damp, sweating walls, covered with a sickly growth of shrubs. These walls were those of the fortifications, upon which the gardens of some of the neighboring houses were laid out.

On the ground floor of the house, the largest room was a *salle*, the entrance to which was under the arch of the porte-cochère. Few persons realize the importance of a *salle* in the small towns of Anjou, Touraine and Berri. It is at once the antechamber, the salon, the study, the boudoir and the dining-room; it is the theatre of family life, the common living-room; there the hairdresser of the quarter cut Monsieur Grandet's hair twice a year; therein were received the farmers, the curé, the sub-prefect, the carpenter. The apartment had two windows looking on the street and a wooden floor; the wainscoting extended from floor to ceiling and consisted of gray panels with antique carvings; the ceiling consisted of exposed beams, also painted gray, the spaces between being filled with white plaster which had turned yellow. An old copper clock, inlaid with arabesques of shell-work, stood upon the mantelpiece of wretchedly carved white stone, over which was a greenish mirror, whose edges, being

beveled to show its thickness, reflected a thread of light upon a frame of damascened steel. The two gilded copper candelabra that embellished the ends of the mantel, served a double purpose; by removing the roses which served as sconces and by which the main branch was connected with the pedestal of bluish marble set in old copper, the pedestal became a candlestick for everyday use. The chairs, which were of antique shape, were upholstered in tapestry representing the fables of La Fontaine; but one must have been aware of the fact beforehand in order to recognize the subjects, the faded colors and patched figures were so difficult to distinguish. In the four corners of the room were corner-pieces, something after the style of buffets, surmounted by untidy *étagères*. An old marquetry card table, the upper part a chessboard, stood in the space between the windows. Above the table was an oval barometer, in a black frame, set off by ribbons, carved and gilded, but the flies had made such sad work that the location of the gilding was a problem. On the wall opposite the fireplace were two portraits in pastel supposed to represent Madame Grandet's grandfather, old Monsieur de la Bertellière, as a lieutenant in the Gardes-Françaises, and the defunct Madame Gentillet in the costume of a shepherdess. At the windows were curtains of red Tours silk fastened back by silk cord with tassels such as we see in churches. These luxurious appointments, so little in harmony with Grandet's habits, were comprised in the purchase of the house, as were the pier

glass, the clock, the tapestry-covered chairs and the rosewood corner-pieces. In the window nearest the door, was a straw chair with its legs raised upon blocks, in order to elevate Madame Grandet sufficiently to enable her to see the passers-by. A work-table of faded cherry wood filled the window recess, and Eugénie's little armchair stood close beside it. For fifteen years the mother and daughter had passed all their days peacefully in that place, constantly at work, from April to November. On the first of the latter month they were at liberty to assume their winter station by the hearth. Not until that day did Grandet permit a fire to be lighted in the room, and it was extinguished on the thirty-first of March, without reference to the last cold days of spring or those of the early autumn. A foot-warmer, heated with embers from the kitchen fire, which tall Nanon saved for them by skilful manœuvring, assisted Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet to endure the coolest mornings and evenings in April and October. The mother and daughter supplied all the linen of the household, and employed their days so conscientiously in this working-woman's task, that, if Eugénie wished to embroider a neckerchief for her mother, she was compelled to steal the time from her hours of repose, and to deceive her father in order to procure a light. For a long time, the miser had given out candles to his daughter and to tall Nanon, just as he gave out in the morning the bread and supplies necessary for the day's consumption.

Tall Nanon was perhaps the only human being capable of submitting to her master's despotism. The whole town envied Monsieur and Madame Grandet in the possession of their servant. Tall Nanon, so called because she measured five feet eight inches in height, had belonged to Grandet for thirty-five years. Although her wages were but sixty francs, she was reputed to be one of the richest servants in Saumur. The sixty francs, accumulated for thirty-five years, had made it possible for her recently to invest four thousand francs in an annuity with Master Cruchot. This result of Nanon's long-continued and persistent habit of saving seemed gigantic. Every servant in the town, seeing that the poor old sexagenarian was sure of support in her old age, was jealous of her, regardless of the harsh servitude in which she had acquired her wealth. At the age of twenty-two the poor girl was unable to find a place, her face was so repulsive; and yet the feeling was unjust: her face would have been much admired on the shoulders of a grenadier of the Guard; but everything in its place, they say. Compelled by the burning of the house to leave a farm where she took care of the cows, she came to Saumur, where she sought work, inspired by the robust courage that refuses no opportunity.

Monsieur Grandet was contemplating marriage at the time and desired to set up housekeeping beforehand. He ran his eye over this girl who was being turned away from one door after another. Being an excellent judge of physical strength in his capacity

of cooper, he saw how much work he might extract from a female built on the pattern of Hercules, planted on her feet like a sixty-year oak on its roots, strong-hipped, square-backed, with the hands of a carrier and probity as unswerving as her unsullied virtue. Neither the excrescences that adorned Nanon's martial countenance, nor her brick-red complexion, nor her sinewy arms, nor her rags dismayed the cooper, who was still at an age when the heart is easily moved. He clothed, shod and fed the poor girl, gave her wages and employed her, without demanding too much of her. Such treatment made tall Nanon weep for joy in secret, and caused her to feel a sincere affection for the cooper, who, however, exerted all the rights of a feudal lord. Nanon did everything; she cooked, she made the lye, she washed the linen in the Loire and brought it back on her shoulders; she rose at daybreak and went to bed late; she cooked for all the grape-pickers during the harvest and watched the marketmen; she defended her master's property like a faithful dog; in a word, full of blind confidence in him, she gratified, without a murmur, his most absurd whims. In the famous year 1811, when the harvest required incredible exertions, Grandet determined to present his old watch to Nanon, who had then been twenty years in his service; it was the only gift she ever received from him. Although he turned over his old shoes to her, —and she could wear them,—it is impossible to look upon the quarterly income of Grandet's shoes

as a gift, they were so thoroughly worn out. Necessity made the poor girl so miserly that Grandet had ended by becoming fond of her, as one is fond of a dog, and Nanon had allowed a collar provided with sharp points that did not prick her, to be placed about her neck. If Grandet cut the bread a little too stingily, she did not complain; she participated cheerfully in the hygienic advantages accruing from the strict diet enforced in the household, where no one was ever sick.

Nanon was one of the family; she laughed when Grandet laughed, was sad and cold and warm when he was, and worked with him. How many soothing compensations in such equality! The master had never begrudged the servant a peach, or the plums and nectarines eaten under the trees.

"Go and eat your fill, Nanon," he would say in seasons when the branches were bent double with the fruit and the farmers were obliged to feed them to the pigs.

To a country girl who in her youth had never harvested aught but harsh treatment, to a poor creature taken in from charity, Père Grandet's equivocal laugh was a genuine ray of sunlight. Moreover, Nanon's simple heart and narrow brain could contain only one sentiment and one idea. In thirty-five years she had not forgotten how she arrived one day at Monsieur Grandet's lumber yard, barefooted and in rags, and she could still hear the cooper saying to her: "What do you want, little one?" and her gratitude was still young. Sometimes, reflecting

that the poor creature had never heard the slightest word of flattery, that she knew nothing of the softer feelings that woman inspires and might appear some day before God, more chaste than the Virgin Mary herself, Grandet, in an outburst of pity, would say as he looked at her:

"Poor Nanon!"

His exclamation was always followed by an indefinable glance from the old servant. That expression, uttered from time to time, had long since formed an unbroken chain of friendship, to which each repetition of it added a link. There was something horrible about this pity, rooted in Grandet's heart and taken in good part by the old servant. This ghastly miser's compassion, which awakened a thousand pleasant sensations in the old cooper's heart, was the height of earthly bliss to Nanon. Who will not echo the words: "Poor Nanon?" God will recognize his angels by the inflections of their voices and their mysterious regrets.

There were very many households in Saumur where the servants were more generously paid, but the masters nevertheless were always dissatisfied. Whence this other phrase: "What in the world do the Grandets do to their tall Nanon to make her so attached to them? She'd go through fire for them!"

Her kitchen, with barred windows looking on the courtyard, was always clean and neat and cold, a genuine miser's kitchen, where nothing must ever be wasted. When Nanon had washed the plate,

put away the remains of the dinner and put out her fire, she left the kitchen, which was separated from the living room by a passage, and sat down with her employers to spin hemp. A single candle sufficed for the family for the evening. The servant slept at the end of the passage in a den lighted by an inside window. Her robust health made it possible for her to occupy without danger this species of hole, where she could hear the slightest noise in the profound silence that reigned in the house day and night. Like a police bloodhound, she slept with one ear open and rested when she was awake.

The description of the other portions of the house will find its place in the course of this narrative; in any event this sketch of the *salle* where all the family luxury was displayed, will convey a hint of the barrenness of the upper floors.

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In the early evening of a certain day in the month of November, 1819, tall Nanon lighted the fire for the first time. It had been a lovely autumn. The day in question was a festival well known to the Cruchotins and Grassinistes. And so the six antagonists prepared to meet in the *salle*, armed at all points, and to surpass one another in demonstrations of friendship. In the morning, all Saumur had seen Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet, accompanied by Nanon, on their way to the parish church to hear mass, and one and all remembered that that day was the anniversary of Mademoiselle Eugénie's birth. And so, having made an estimate of the hour at which the family would surely have finished dinner, Master Cruchot, Abbé Cruchot and Monsieur Cruchot de Bonfons made haste to arrive before the Des Grassins to congratulate Mademoiselle Grandet. All three carried enormous bouquets plucked in their little hot-houses. The stalks of the flowers that the president proposed to present were ingeniously wrapped in a white satin ribbon embellished with gold fringe.

In the morning, Monsieur Grandet, according to his custom on such memorable occasions as Eugénie's birthday and saint's day, had surprised her in her bed and had solemnly presented his

paternal offering, which, for the last thirteen years, had consisted of a curious gold piece. Madame Grandet ordinarily gave her daughter a winter or a summer dress according to the season. These two dresses, and the gold pieces that she received on New Year's day and her father's saint's day, made up a little income of about a hundred crowns which Grandet loved to see accumulating. Was it not equivalent to taking his money out of one strong box and putting it into another, and, so to speak, bringing up his daughter's avarice by hand? He sometimes asked her for an account of her treasure, to which the La Bertellières formerly used to contribute, saying:

"That will be your marriage *dozen.*"

The dozen is an antique custom still in full vigor and religiously preserved in such provinces in the centre of France. In Berri and in Anjou, when a young girl marries, her family or the bridegroom's are expected to give her a purse containing twelve pieces, twelve dozen pieces or twelve hundred pieces of gold or silver, according to the circumstances of the parties. The poorest of shepherdesses would not marry without her *dozen,* even if it consisted only of large sous. They still tell at Issoudun of a *dozen* presented to a rich heiress, consisting of a hundred and forty-four Portuguese gold pieces. Pope Clement VII., Catherine de Medici's uncle, presented her, when she married Henri II., with a dozen antique gold medallions of enormous value.

During dinner the father, overjoyed to see the enhanced loveliness of Eugénie in a new dress, exclaimed:

"As it's Eugénie's birthday, let us make a fire! it will be a good omen."

"Mademoiselle will be married within a year, sure," said tall Nanon, as she removed the remains of a goose, the pheasant of coopers.

"I don't think of any proper husband for her in Saumur," replied Madame Grandet, glancing at her husband with a timid air, which, in view of her age, clearly indicated the absolute conjugal servitude under which the poor woman groaned.

Grandet looked at his daughter and replied gayly:

"The child is twenty-three years old to-day; we must be looking out for her soon."

Eugénie and her mother silently exchanged a glance of intelligence.

Madame Grandet was a thin, dried-up woman, yellow as a quince, awkward and slow of movement; one of the women who seem to have been made to be tyrannized over. She had large bones, a large nose, a large forehead, large eyes, and presented, at first sight, a vague resemblance to those stringy fruits that have neither savor nor juice. Her teeth were few and black, her mouth was wrinkled, her chin was what is called galoche-shaped. She was an excellent woman, a real La Bertellière. Abbé Cruchot was not slow to find opportunities to tell her that she had lived an exemplary life, and she believed him. An angelic mildness of disposition, the resignation of

an insect tormented by children, rare piety, unalterable equanimity and a kind heart caused her to be universally pitied and respected. Her husband never gave her more than six francs at once for pin money. Although ridiculous in appearance, this woman, who, by way of marriage portion and by the sums she had inherited, had brought Monsieur Grandet more than three hundred thousand francs, had always felt so profoundly humiliated by a dependence and serfdom against which her gentle disposition forbade her to rebel, that she had never asked for a sou or made any remarks upon the documents Master Cruchot presented for her signature. This foolish, hidden pride, this noble-mindedness, constantly misconstrued and wounded by Grandet, was the predominating factor in her conduct.

Madame Grandet invariably wore a dress of green levantine, and had accustomed herself to make each one last nearly a year; she also wore a white cottonade fichu and a hat of stitched straw, and seldom laid aside a black silk apron. As she seldom left the house she wore out few shoes. In short, she never wanted anything for herself. Wherefore Grandet, feeling a twinge of remorse sometimes when he remembered how long ago it was since he gave his wife six francs, always stipulated for pin money for her when he sold his harvest for the year. The four or five louis proffered by the Dutch or Belgian purchaser of the Grandet crop formed the major part of Madame Grandet's annual income.

But when she received her five louis her husband would often say to her, as if they had a common purse: "Can you let me have a few sous?"—and the poor woman, overjoyed to be able to do something for a man whom her confessor represented to her as her lord and master, would return to him, during the winter, more than one crown out of her pin money. When Grandet took from his pocket the hundred-sou piece that he allowed his daughter for her monthly expenses, needles and thread and dress,—he never failed to say to his wife after he had buttoned up his fob:

"Is there anything you want, mother?"

"My dear," Madame Grandet would reply, actuated by a feeling of maternal dignity, "we will see."

Wasted sublimity! Grandet deemed himself very generous to his wife. Are not the philosophers who fall in with the Nanons, the Madame Grandets, the Eugénies, justified in considering that irony lies at the root of the character of Providence?

After dinner, at which the subject of Eugénie's marriage was broached for the first time, Nanon went to Monsieur Grandet's room for a bottle of currant wine and nearly fell as she came downstairs.

"You great booby," said her master; "do you go tumbling around like other people?"

"It's that stair, monsieur, that isn't safe."

"She is right," said Madame Grandet. "You ought to have had it fixed long ago. Yesterday, Eugénie nearly sprained her foot on it."

"Look you," said Grandet to Nanon, seeing that she was as pale as a ghost, "since it's Eugénie's birthday and you came near falling, take a small glass of currant wine to set yourself to rights."

"Faith, I've earned it," said Nanon. "There are plenty who'd have broken the bottle if they'd been in my place; but I would rather have broken my elbow trying to hold it up."

"Poor Nanon!" said Grandet, pouring out the wine.

"Did you hurt yourself?" said Eugénie, looking at her with interest.

"No, I saved myself by throwing myself on my side."

"Well, as 'tis Eugénie's birthday," said Grandet, "I'll mend your stair. You people don't know enough to step in the corner where it's still strong."

Grandet took the candle, leaving his wife and daughter and servant with no other light than that from the hearth, where a bright fire was burning, and went into the bakehouse for a board and hammer and nails.

"Shall I help you?" cried Nanon, when she heard him hammering on the stairs.

"No! no! I know what I'm about," replied the ex-cooper.

While Grandet was at work upon his worm-eaten staircase and whistling for dear life in memory of his youthful years, the three Cruchots knocked at the door.

"Is that you, Monsieur Cruchot?" asked Nanon, looking through the little wicket.

"Yes," the president replied.

Nanon opened the door and the firelight, which shone into the vestibule, enabled the three Cruchots to make out the entrance to the *salle.*

"Ah! you're in full fig," said Nanon, smelling the flowers.

"Excuse me, messieurs," cried Grandet, recognizing his friend's voice, "I'll be with you directly! I'm not proud, I'm fixing up one of my stairs myself."

"Go on, go on, Monsieur Grandet! *Every mayor's house is his castle!* * said the president, laughing all by himself at his allusion, which no one understood.

Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet rose. The president, taking advantage of the darkness, at once said to Eugénie:

"Will you permit me, mademoiselle, on your birthday, to wish you many happy years and a continuance of the health you enjoy?"

He offered her a huge bouquet of flowers that were rare at Saumur; then, taking the heiress by the elbows, he kissed her on both sides of the neck with an offhand manner that made Eugénie blush with shame. The president, who resembled a great rusty nail, thought that a fitting way to pay court to her.

*"Charbonnier est *maître* chez lui," is the French equivalent for the proverb: "Every man's house is his castle." But the president says: "Charbonnier est *maire* chez lui."

"Don't disturb yourself," said Grandet, returning to the room. "How you do bestir yourself on holidays, Monsieur le Président!"

"Why, with mademoiselle," replied Abbé Cruchot, armed with his bouquet, "all days would be holidays to my nephew."

The abbé kissed Eugénie's hand. As for Master Cruchot, he good-naturedly kissed the young girl on both cheeks and said:

"How she does grow! Twelve months in every year."

As he replaced the light in front of the clock, Grandet, who never dropped a joke, but repeated it to satiety when it seemed to him particularly amusing, remarked:

"As it's Eugénie's birthday, let's light the candles!"

He carefully removed the branches of the candelabra, placed the socket on each pedestal, took from Nanon's hands a new candle with a bit of paper twisted around it, stuck it in the hole, made sure that it was firm, lighted it and sat down beside his wife, glancing alternately at his friends, his daughter and the two candles.

"Haven't the Des Grassins come?" said Abbé Cruchot, a plump little man, with a flat, red wig and the face of a gambling old woman, as he put forward his feet, well shod in stout shoes with silver clasps.

"Not yet," said Grandet.

"But they're coming, aren't they?" asked the

old notary, screwing up his face, as full of holes as a skimmer.

"I think so," said Madame Grandet.

"Are your crops all in?" Président de Bonfons asked Grandet.

"Everywhere!" the old vinedresser replied, leaving his seat to pace up and down the room and expanding his chest with a movement as full of pride as that he expressed by his word, "everywhere!"

Through the door leading from the passage into the kitchen he saw tall Nanon, sitting beside her fire with a light, and preparing to spin there, in order not to take part in the fête.

"Nanon," he said, going out into the passage, "will you be kind enough to put out your fire and your light and come in with us? *Pardieu!* the room is large enough for us all."

"But, monsieur, you'll have fine company."

"Aren't you as good as they are? They came out of Adam's side just as you did."

Grandet went back into the room and said to the president:

"Have you sold your crop?"

"Faith, no, I'm keeping it. If the wine is good now, it will be better two years hence. The landowners, you know, have sworn to hold to the prices agreed upon, and, this year, the Belgians won't get the better of us. If they go away, why, they'll come back again."

"Yes, but let us hold fast," said Grandet, in a tone that made the president shudder.

"Can he be in the market?" thought Cruchot.

At that moment a blow of the knocker announced the Des Grassins family, and their arrival interrupted a conversation begun between Madame Grandet and the abbé.

Madame des Grassins was one of those little, active, plump, white and pink women, who, thanks to the monastic régime of the provinces and the habits of a virtuous life, maintain their youth to the age of forty. They are like the last roses of a backward season, which are pleasant to look at, but whose petals have an indefinable lack of warmth and whose odor is almost imperceptible. She dressed very well, sent to Paris for the latest styles, set the fashion in Saumur, and had evenings at home. Her husband, a former quartermaster in the Imperial Guard, who was severely wounded at Austerlitz and was on the retired list, retained the free and easy manner of the military man despite his regard for Grandet.

"Good evening, Grandet," he said, giving his hand to the vinedresser and assuming a sort of superiority beneath which he always crushed the Cruchots.—"Mademoiselle," he said to Eugénie, after saluting Madame Grandet, "you are always lovely and virtuous, and I don't know, on my word, what one can wish you."

Then he presented a little box which his servant had brought and which contained a sprig of heather from the Cape, a flower recently brought to Europe and very rare.

Madame des Grassins kissed Eugénie very effusively, pressed her hand, and said:

"Adolphe has undertaken to give you my little souvenir."

A tall, fair-haired young man, pale and slender, not ill-mannered, and bashful in appearance, although he had recently spent eight or ten thousand francs over and above his allowance in Paris, where he had been studying law, walked up to Eugénie, kissed her on both cheeks, and offered her a workbox with silver gilt utensils—undeniable pinchbeck, although the crest, upon which was a gothic E. G. very well engraved, might lead one to consider it a very fine piece of work. Upon opening it, Eugénie experienced one of those unhoped-for, unalloyed joys which cause young girls to blush and thrill and tremble. She glanced at her father as if to ask if she might accept it, and Monsieur Grandet emitted a "Take it, my child!" with an accent that would have done credit to a great actor. The three Cruchots were dumfounded when they saw the bright, joyous glance bestowed upon Adolphe des Grassins by the heiress, to whom such wealth seemed fabulous.

Monsieur des Grassins offered Grandet a pinch of snuff, took one himself, shook off the grains that had fallen upon the ribbon of the Legion of Honor tied in the buttonhole of his blue coat, then glanced at the Cruchots with an expression that seemed to say: "Parry that thrust if you can!" Madame des Grassins cast her eyes on the blue jars containing

the Cruchot bouquets, looking about for their gifts with the pretended good faith of a satirical woman. At this delicate juncture, Abbé Cruchot left the party sitting in a circle before the fire and walked to the lower end of the room with Grandet. When the two old men were in the window recess farthest removed from the Des Grassins:

"Those people," said the priest in the miser's ear, "throw money out of the window."

"What harm does that do if it comes into my cellar?" retorted the old vinedresser.

"If you wanted to give your daughter golden scissors, you could do it," said the abbé.

"I give her something better than scissors," rejoined Grandet.

"My nephew's a blockhead," thought the abbé, looking at the president, whose disheveled hair added to the unattractiveness of his dark face. "Couldn't he have got hold of some foolish thing that was worth something?"

"We are going to make up your table, Madame Grandet," said Madame des Grassins.

"But we are all together, we might have two tables."

"As it's Eugénie's birthday, make your *loto* general," said Père Grandet; "the two children will play."

The ex-cooper, who never played any game, pointed to his daughter and Adolphe.

"Come, Nanon, set out the tables."

"We will help you, Mademoiselle Nanon," said

Madame des Grassins gayly, overjoyed to have afforded Eugénie so much pleasure.

"I have never been so happy in my life," said the heiress. "I never saw anything so pretty anywhere."

"Adolphe selected it and brought it from Paris," said Madame des Grassins in her ear.

"Go on, go on, you damned schemer!" said the president to himself; "if you or your husband ever go to law, you'll find it hard to make out a good case."

The notary, sitting in his corner, looked calmly at the abbé, saying to himself:

"The Des Grassins are wasting their pains; my fortune, my brother's and my nephew's amount to eleven hundred thousand francs. The Des Grassins have at most half as much, and they have a daughter; they can give what they choose! heiress and gifts will all come to us some day."

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At half-past eight in the evening two tables were prepared for the game. Pretty Madame des Grassins had succeeded in placing her son beside Eugénie. The actors in this scene—which was in reality full of interest although commonplace enough in appearance—furnished with cards covered with figures, and with blue glass counters, seemed to be listening to the notary's jokes—he did not draw a number without some remark; but they were all thinking of Monsieur Grandet's millions. The old cooper glanced vaingloriously at Madame des Grassins' red feathers and fresh costume, at the banker's martial head, at Adolphe, the president, the abbé and the notary, and said to himself:

"They're here for my crowns. They come here to be bored on my daughter's account. Ha! ha! my daughter isn't for any of them, and they all make good harpoons for me to fish with!"

This family gayety, in the old gray salon, dimly lighted by two candles; this laughter to the accompaniment of tall Nanon's spinning-wheel—laughter that was sincere on no lips save Eugénie's and her mother's; this petty scheming in furtherance of such important interests; this girl, who—like the birds that fall victims to the high price set upon them, of which they know nothing—was snared

and enveloped by demonstrations of friendship which deceived her completely: everything contributed to make this scene a sadly comical one. Was it not, by the way, a scene common to all times and all places, reduced to its sipmlest expression? The form of Grandet, making the most of the false attachment of the two families and deriving enormous profits therefrom, dominated the drama and shed light upon it. Was not the only modern god in whom men have faith, Money in all its power, there expressed by a single face? The gentler sentiments of life occupied only a secondary place there; they animated three pure hearts, Nanon's, Eugénie's and her mother's. And yet how much ignorance there was in their ingenuousness! Eugénie and her mother knew nothing about Grandet's fortune, they viewed the affairs of life by the light of their colorless ideas, and neither coveted nor despised money, accustomed as they were to do without it. Their feelings, which were constantly slighted, without their knowledge, but were easily stirred, their secluded existence, made them interesting exceptions in that assemblage of people whose lives were purely material. Horrible plight of mankind! there is not one of its joys that does not proceed from ignorance on some point.

Just as Madame Grandet won a pool of sixteen sous, the most extensive that had ever been played for in that room, and while tall Nanon was laughing with delight to see her mistress pocket that enormous sum, a knock at the outer door echoed

through the house and made such a commotion that the women jumped from their chairs.

"There's no man in Saumur who would knock like that," said the notary.

"How can they hammer so hard!" said Nanon. "Are they trying to break down the door?"

"Who the devil is it?" cried Grandet.

Nanon took one of the candles and went to open the door, accompanied by Grandet.

"Grandet! Grandet!" cried his wife, as she rushed toward the door of the *salle*, impelled by a vague feeling of alarm.

All the players exchanged glances.

"Had we better go?" said Monsieur des Grassins. "That blow of the knocker seems to me of evil import."

The banker hardly caught a glimpse of the figure of a young man, accompanied by a porter from the Messageries carrying two enormous trunks and dragging carpet-bags behind him. Grandet turned sharply upon his wife and said:

"Madame Grandet, return to your game. Leave me to come to terms with monsieur."

With that he hastily closed the door of the living-room, where the excited gamblers resumed their seats, but did not continue their game.

"Was it someone from Saumur, Monsieur des Grassins?" his wife inquired.

"No, it's a traveler."

"He can't have come from anywhere but Paris."

"Upon my word," said the notary, drawing his

old watch, as thick as two fingers, which resembled a Dutch man-of-war, "it's nine o'clock. Egad! the Grand Bureau diligence is never behindhand."

"Is the gentleman young?" inquired Abbé Cruchot.

"Yes," Monsieur des Grassins replied. "He has a lot of luggage that must weigh three hundred kilos."

"Nanon hasn't come back," said Eugénie.

"It must be one of your relations," said the president.

"Let us go on with the game," suggested Madame Grandet, mildly. "I knew by Monsieur Grandet's voice that he was annoyed; perhaps he wouldn't like to find us talking about his business."

"Mademoiselle," said Adolphe to his neighbor, "no doubt it's your cousin Grandet, a very good-looking young man, whom I saw at Monsieur de Nucingen's ball."

Adolphe did not continue, for his mother trod on his foot; and then, as she asked him aloud for two sous for her stake, she said in his ear:

"Hold your tongue, you great booby!"

At that moment Grandet entered the room without Nanon, whose step and the porter's could be heard on the stairs; he was followed by the traveler, who had aroused so much curiosity for some moments past and so stirred the imaginations of the party, that his arrival in that house and his sudden appearance in that circle may fittingly be compared to the appearance of a snail in a beehive, or the

introduction of a peacock into some obscure village barnyard.

"Sit down by the fire," said Grandet.

Before taking his seat, the young stranger graciously saluted the assemblage. The men rose to reply with polite bows and the women made ceremonious curtsies.

"You must be cold, monsieur," said Madame Grandet; "you have come from—?"

"That's just like a woman!" said the old vinedresser, looking up from a letter he held in his hand; "pray give monsieur a chance to rest."

"But, father, perhaps monsieur would like something," said Eugénie.

"He has a tongue," retorted the vinedresser sternly.

The stranger alone was surprised at this scene. The others were accustomed to the good man's despotic ways. However, when the two questions and the two replies had been exchanged, the young man rose, turned his back to the fire, raised one of his feet to warm the sole of his shoe, and said to Eugénie:

"Thank you, cousin, I dined at Tours. And," he added, with a glance at Grandet, "I need nothing at all; I am not even tired."

"Monsieur comes from the capital?" queried Madame des Grassins.

Monsieur Charles—such was the baptismal name of the son of Monsieur Grandet of Paris—upon hearing the questions, raised a small monocle that

hung by a chain from his neck and applied it to his right eye, in order to examine what there was upon the table and the persons seated thereat; he bestowed an impertinent stare upon Madame des Grassins, and said to her, after he had scrutinized everything and everybody:

"Yes, madame.—You're playing loto, aunt," he added; "go on with your game, I beg; it's too good fun to stop."

"I was sure it was the cousin," thought Madame des Grassins, casting little sidelong glances at him.

"Forty-seven," cried the old abbé. "Mark, mark, Madame des Grassins, isn't that your number?"

Monsieur des Grassins placed a counter on his wife's card, for she, a prey to melancholy forebodings, was watching the cousin from Paris and Eugénie, oblivious of the loto. From time to time the young heiress glanced furtively at her cousin, and the banker's wife could easily discover in her face a *crescendo* of surprise or curiosity.

Monsieur Charles Grandet, a comely youth of twenty-two, presented at that moment a striking contrast to the worthy provincials who were already considerably disgusted with his aristocratic manners, and all of whom were studying him in order to make sport of him. This calls for an explanation. At twenty-two, young men are still near enough to childhood to indulge in childish tricks. Probably ninety-nine out of a hundred of them would have behaved as Charles Grandet behaved. Some days before this, his father had bade him go to spend a

few months with his brother at Saumur. Perhaps Monsieur Grandet of Paris was thinking of Eugénie. Charles, who then descended upon the provinces for the first time, determined to make his appearance with the superior manners of a young man of fashion, to drive the arrondissement to despair by his elegance, to make his coming an epoch-making event and to introduce there all the refinements of Parisian life. In brief, to put the whole thing in a nutshell, he determined to give even more time at Saumur than at Paris to the care of his finger-nails, and to affect the excessive elegance of costume which a fashionable young man sometimes lays aside for the studied negligence that does not lack charm. Charles carried therefore the nattiest hunting costume, the finest rifle, the prettiest knife and the daintiest sheath to be found in Paris. He carried his whole collection of waistcoats of the most ingenious combinations of color; there were grays and whites and blacks, beetle-green shot with gold, spangled, variegated, with straight collars or collars turned back, buttoned to the throat, and with gilt buttons. He carried all the varieties of collars and cravats in favor at that period. He carried two Buisson coats and his finest linen. He carried his pretty gold toilet-case, a present from his mother. He carried all his dandy's gewgaws, not forgetting a charming little writing case given him by the dearest of women,—in his eyes at all events,—by a great lady whom he called Annette, and who was traveling with her husband in Scotland, to her

intense disgust, a victim of certain suspicions to which she was compelled to sacrifice her happiness momentarily; it was well provided with dainty paper on which to write her a letter once a fortnight. In short, his luggage contained a cargo of Parisian absurdities as complete as it could possibly be made,—all the implements of husbandry that a young idler uses to plough his way through life, from the hunting-crop which serves to begin a duel, to the beautiful carved pistols that bring it to an end. His father having told him to travel alone and modestly, he had taken the whole coupé of the diligence, well pleased not to ruin a lovely traveling carriage he had ordered for the journey to meet his Annette, the great lady, etc., whom he was to join the following June at the waters of Baden.

Charles expected to meet a hundred people at his uncle's house, to hunt in his uncle's forests, in a word, to lead a genuine country-house life there; he did not know that he should find him at Saumur, where he inquired about him only to ask the way to Froidfond; but when he learned that he was in town, he supposed that he should find him in a magnificent house. In order to make a suitable appearance under his uncle's roof, whether at Saumur or at Froidfond, he had achieved a toilet for the last stage of the journey that was most coquettish, most exquisite in its simplicity, most adorable, to use a word in vogue in those days to sum up the special perfections of a man or of a thing. At Tours, a hairdresser curled his lovely chestnut locks; he changed

his linen there and donned a black satin cravat which combined with a round collar to make a pleasing setting for his fair, smiling face. A traveling *redingote* half-buttoned, fitted tightly at the waist, and disclosed a cashmere waistcoat, beneath which was a second white waistcoat. His watch, carelessly dropped at random into a pocket, was attached by a short gold chain to one of his buttonholes. His gray trousers were buttoned on the sides, where the seams were adorned with designs embroidered in black silk. He gracefully flourished a slender cane with a chased gold knob that did not mar his spotless gray gloves. Lastly, his cap was of faultless pattern. None but a Parisian, a Parisian of the most exalted sphere, could array himself thus without appearing ridiculous, and impart a harmony of self-conceit, as it were, to all these absurdities, which, moreover were carried off with an air of bravado, the air of a young man who has handsome pistols, a sure aim and an Annette.

Now if you desire to attain a perfect comprehension of the surprise of the Saumurites and of the young Parisian respectively, to realize fully the dazzling light that the traveler's fashionable costumes hid amid the gray shadows of the *salle*, and the figures that composed the family tableau, try to imagine the appearance of the Cruchots. All three took snuff and had long ago ceased to think about the little black particles that spotted the frills of their rusty shirts, with their rumpled, yellow collars. Their limp cravats twisted themselves into

ropes as soon as they tied them about their necks. The enormous quantities of linen, which made it possible for them to have it washed only once in six months, and to keep it stowed away in their wardrobes, allowed time to stamp its gray and rusty marks upon it. There was perfect accord between them in the matter of awkwardness and senility. Their faces, which were as faded as their shiny coats, as full of creases as their pantaloons, seemed worn and hardened, and their features were constantly distorted. The general negligence of the other costumes, all incomplete and devoid of freshness, as provincial toilets always are,—for provincials insensibly abandon the practice of dressing for one another and reach the point where they consider the price of a pair of gloves,—was in harmony with the negligence of the Cruchots. The horror of anything fashionable was the only point upon which the Cruchotins and the Grassinistes agreed perfectly.

When the Parisian took up his monocle to scrutinize the curious accessories of the apartment, the beams of the ceiling, the color of the wainscoting or the dots the flies had left upon it, which were numerous enough to punctuate the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* and the *Moniteur*, the loto players at once raised their heads and stared at him with as much curiosity as they would have manifested for a giraffe. Monsieur des Grassins and his son, to whom the figure of a man of fashion was not entirely unknown, associated themselves with the

amazement of their neighbors none the less,—either because they experienced the indefinable influence of a general sentiment, or because they approved it,—by saying to their compatriots, by means of ironical glances:

"That's the way people look in Paris!"

They were all at liberty to watch Charles at their leisure, without fear of annoying the master of the house. Grandet was absorbed in the long letter he was reading, and he had taken the only candle from the table, regardless of his guests and of their pleasure. Eugénie, to whom such perfection, in costume or in person, was entirely unfamiliar, thought that she saw in her cousin a creature descended from some region inhabited by seraphim. She breathed with ecstasy the perfume exhaled by those glossy, gracefully-curling locks. She would have liked to touch the satiny kid of those dainty gloves. She envied Charles his small hands, his complexion, the freshness and delicacy of his features. In a word, if we may use this image to sum up the impressions the young dandy produced upon an inexperienced girl constantly occupied in darning stockings and mending her father's clothes, and whose whole life was passed beneath those dingy hangings looking into a street through which not one person passed in an hour, the sight of her cousin aroused in her heart the feeling of keen pleasure that a young man feels at sight of the fanciful female creations designed by Westall for English keepsakes, and engraved by a Finden with such marvelous skill that one fears

lest, by breathing upon the vellum, he may cause the celestial apparitions to take flight.

Charles took from his pocket a handkerchief embroidered by the great lady who was traveling in Scotland. When she saw that lovely bit of work done by love's hand in hours lost to love, Eugénie looked at her cousin to see if he really proposed to use it. Charles's manners, his gestures, his way of handling his monocle, his affected impertinence, his contempt for the workbox which had given the wealthy heiress so much pleasure, and which he evidently considered to be of no value or in absurdly bad taste—everything, in short, that enraged the Cruchots and the Des Grassins—pleased her so much that she was likely to pass a long time thinking of this phœnix of cousins before going to sleep.

The numbers were drawn very slowly, but soon the game was interrupted. Tall Nanon entered and said aloud:

"Madame, you've got to give me some sheets to make monsieur's bed."

Madame Grandet followed Nanon. Thereupon Madame des Grassins said in an undertone:

"Let us drop the game and keep our sous."

Each person took his two sous from the old chipped bowl in which they were deposited; then the assemblage wheeled about and moved in a body toward the fire.

"Have you finished?" said Grandet, without laying aside his letter.

"Yes, yes," replied Madame des Grassins, taking a seat beside Charles.

Eugénie, moved by one of the thoughts that are born in a young girl's heart when a sentiment finds a lodgment there for the first time, left the room to go and assist her mother and Nanon. If she had been questioned by a shrewd confessor, she would doubtless have admitted that she was thinking neither of her mother nor of Nanon, but that she was impelled by a keen desire to inspect her cousin's chamber, to busy herself about her cousin, to put something or other in place, to see that nothing was forgotten, to anticipate all his wants, in order to make the room as dainty and neat as possible. Eugénie already imagined that she alone was capable of understanding her cousin's tastes and ideas. In fact, she arrived in the nick of time to prove to her mother and Nanon, who were about to return thinking that they had done everything, that everything was still to be done. She suggested to tall Nanon to warm the sheets with the embers of the fire; she herself covered the old table with a cloth, and bade Nanon change it every morning. She convinced her mother of the propriety of lighting a brisk fire on the hearth, and persuaded Nanon to carry up a big pile of wood into the corridor without saying anything to her father. She ran to one of the corner-pieces in the living-room and took therefrom an old lacquer plate which was a part of the inheritance of the late Monsieur de la Bertellière; she also took a hexagonal glass, a little

tarnished gilt spoon, an antique flagon with Loves engraved thereon, and placed them all triumphantly upon a corner of the mantelpiece. More ideas had flowed into her brain in fifteen minutes than she had had since she came into the world.

"Mamma," said she, "my cousin will never endure the smell of our candles. Suppose we should buy a wax candle?"

She ran, as light as a bird, to her purse and took from it the hundred-sou piece she had received for her monthly expenses.

"Here, Nanon," said she, "go at once."

"But what will your father say?"

This terrible objection was put forward by Madame Grandet when she saw her daughter armed with a sugar bowl of old Sèvres brought by Grandet from the Château of Froidfond.

"Where will you get your sugar? are you mad?"

"Nanon must buy some sugar as well as the candle, mamma."

"But your father?"

"Would it be decent not to give his nephew a glass of sugared water? Besides, he won't notice anything."

"Your father sees everything," said Madame Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated; she knew her master.

"Come, go, Nanon, as it's my birthday!"

Nanon emitted a hoarse laugh at the first joke her young mistress had ever made, and obeyed her.

While Eugénie and her mother were doing their

best to beautify the bedroom allotted by Monsieur Grandet to his nephew, Charles found himself the object of marked attention from Madame des Grassins, who brought all her powers of cajolery to bear upon him.

"You are very brave, monsieur," she said, "to leave the pleasures of the capital in the winter to come to Saumur. But, if we don't frighten you too much, you'll see that even here we know how to enjoy ourselves."

She bestowed upon him a veritable leer of the sort peculiar to the provinces, where the women habitually put so much reserve and prudence in the expression of their eyes, that they impart to them the dainty prurience characteristic of the eyes of churchmen, to whom all pleasure seems a theft or a sin. Charles found himself so entirely out of place in that room, so far removed from the vast château and the luxurious existence he had expected, that, upon looking attentively at Madame des Grassins, he detected at last a half-effaced image of the faces he was accustomed to see in Paris. He answered courteously the sort of invitation that was extended to him, and a conversation naturally began, in which Madame des Grassins gradually lowered her voice so that it might harmonize with the nature of her confidences. She and Charles felt the same need of confiding in some one. And so, after a few moments of playful chat and serious jesting, the clever provincial made bold to say, thinking that she would not be overheard by the others, who were

talking about the sale of wine, a subject which engrossed the whole province at that moment:

"If you will do us the honor to come and see us, monsieur, you will certainly give my husband as much pleasure as myself. Our salon is the only one in Saumur where you will find the leading commercial families and the nobility united: we belong to both social sets, who are willing to meet nowhere else, because they enjoy themselves there. My husband—I say it with pride—is equally esteemed by both. We will try to beguile the ennui of your stay here to some slight extent. If you pass all your time at Monsieur Grandet's, *bon Dieu!* what will become of you? Your uncle's a miser who thinks of nothing but his vines; your aunt is a devotee who can't connect two ideas; and your cousin's a little fool, without education, dull, with no dowry, who passes her life mending dish-clouts."

"This woman is very good style," said Charles Grandet to himself, responding to Madame des Grassins' affected airs.

"It seems to me, wife, that you're trying to monopolize monsieur," said the tall, corpulent banker, with a laugh.

At that remark the notary and the president exchanged a few words in which there was more or less malice; but the abbé glanced at them with a shrewd expression and summed up their thoughts as he took a pinch of snuff and offered his snuff-box around the circle:

"Who better than madame," he said, "can do the honors of Saumur to monsieur?"

"Hoity toity! how are we to understand that, Monsieur l'Abbé?" demanded Monsieur des Grassins.

"I mean it, monsieur, in the sense most favorable to you, to madame, to the town of Saumur and to monsieur," added the crafty old man, turning to Charles.

Without seeming to pay the slightest attention, Abbé Cruchot was shrewd enough to guess the purport of the conversation between Charles and Madame des Grassins.

"Monsieur," said Adolphe to Charles, with an air that he tried to render unconstrained, "I don't know if you remember me; I had the honor to be your vis-à-vis at a ball given by Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen, and—"

"Perfectly, monsieur, perfectly," Charles replied, amazed to find himself the object of general attention.

"Is monsieur your son?" he asked Madame des Grassins.

The abbé glanced maliciously at the mother.

"Yes, monsieur," she said.

"Then you came to Paris very young?" said Charles, turning to Adolphe.

"What would you have, monsieur?" said the abbé; "we send them to Babylon as soon as they are weaned."

Madame des Grassins questioned the abbé with a glance of surprising depth.

"You must come into the provinces," he continued, "to find women of thirty years and more as fresh and blooming as madame, after they have borne sons who will soon take their degrees in law. It seems as if it were only yesterday that the young men and women stood on chairs to see you dance, madame," added the abbé, turning to his female adversary. "To me, your successes are still fresh—"

"Oh! the old villain!" said Madame des Grassins to herself, "can he have guessed my plan?"

"It seems that I shall make a great success at Saumur," said Charles to himself, unbuttoning his redingote, putting his hand in his waistcoat and gazing into space in imitation of the attitude in which Chantrey has represented Lord Byron.

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Père Grandet's inattention, or, more properly speaking, the preoccupation in which the perusal of his letter buried him, did not escape the notice of the notary or the president, who tried to form an idea of its contents from the imperceptible movements of the good man's face, upon which the candle cast a bright light. It was hard for the vine-dresser to maintain the usual calm expression of his countenance. However, anyone can imagine for himself the expression assumed by him upon reading the fatal letter which follows:

"MY BROTHER,

"It is nearly twenty-three years since we last met. My marriage was the occasion of our last interview, after which we parted, equally well content. Certainly I could hardly foresee that you would some day be the sole prop of the family, in whose prosperity you then took pleasure. When you have this letter in your hands I shall have ceased to live. In my present position I do not propose to survive the disgrace of bankruptcy. I clung to the edge of the chasm until the last moment, hoping still to save myself. The failures of my broker and of Roguin, my notary, following close upon each other, swept away my last resources and left me nothing. I am so unfortunate as to owe nearly four millions and am unable to offer more than twenty-five per cent cash. My warehoused wines are depreciating at this moment from the ruinous fall in prices caused by the abundance and excellent quality of your crops. Three days hence Paris will say: 'Monsieur Grandet was a rascal!' I, a man of probity, shall

be buried in a shroud of infamy. I deprive my son of his name, upon which I bring disgrace, and of his mother's fortune. The unfortunate child, whom I idolize, knows nothing of this. We parted affectionately. Luckily he has no thought that the last waves of my life overflowed in that parting. Will he not curse me some day? Brother, brother, the curse of one's children is a fearful thing! They can appeal from ours, but theirs is irrevocable. Grandet, you are my senior, you owe me your help; see to it that Charles utters no bitter word over my tomb! Brother, if I wrote you a letter with my blood and tears, there would not be so much grief therein as in this letter I am writing now; for if I wept and bled I should die and cease to suffer; but now I suffer and look at death dry-eyed. So you are now Charles's father! he has no kindred on his mother's side, you know why. Why did I not comply with social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry a great man's natural daughter? Charles has no family now. O my unhappy son! my son! Listen, Grandet, I am not appealing to you on my own account; in any event, your property may not be large enough to stand a mortgage of three millions; but for my son! Be sure, brother, my supplicating hands are clasped as I think of you. Grandet, dying, I entrust Charles to you. I contemplate my pistols without sorrow, thinking that you will be a father to him. He loved me dearly, did Charles; I was so kind to him, I never refused him anything; he won't curse me. You will see; he is of a gentle disposition; he takes after his mother and he will never vex you. Poor child! accustomed to luxurious living as he is, he knows nothing of the privations to which our early poverty condemned us. And now he is ruined, he is alone! Yes, all his friends will shun him, and I shall be the cause of his humiliation. Ah! I wish my arms were strong to send him to join his mother in Heaven with a single blow. Madness! I recur to my misfortune and Charles's. I have sent him to you so that you might tell him at the proper time of my death and of his future prospects. Be a father to him, but a kind father. Do

not tear him abruptly from his idle life or you will kill him. I beg him on my knees to abandon the claims that he might, as his mother's heir, seek to enforce against me. But it is an unnecessary prayer; he is an honorable man, and he will feel that he ought not to join the ranks of my creditors. Urge him to renounce his claim to inherit from me while the renunciation will be of some use. Disclose to him the harsh conditions of the life I have imposed upon him; and if he retains his affection for me, tell him, in my name, all is not lost. Yes, work, which saved you and me, will restore the fortune of which I have deprived him; and, if he will listen to the voice of his father, who would like to rise from the grave a moment for his sake, let him leave France, let him go to the Indies! Brother, Charles is an upright, brave young man; if you should get together a small sum, he would die rather than not return what you lend him; for you will lend him, I know, Grandet! if not, you will lay up remorse for yourself. Ah! if my child should not receive help or affection at your hands I would pray to God forever for revenge for your cruelty. If I had been able to save anything at all, I should have been justified in giving him something on account of his mother's property; but my payments at the end of the month had absorbed all my resources. I would have preferred not to die in uncertainty as to my child's fate; I would have liked to feel sacred promises in the heat of your hand, which would have warmed me; but I had no time. While Charles is traveling, I must prepare a statement of my affairs. I am trying to prove by my absolute good faith in business that there has been neither crime nor dishonesty in my disasters. Is not that the best course I can take in Charles's interest? Adieu, brother. May all God's blessings rest upon you in the fulfilment of the trust which I confide to you, and which you will accept, I doubt not. There will be one voice that will pray unceasingly for you in the world to which we all must go some day, and where I already am.

"VICTOR-ANGE-GUILLAUME GRANDET."

"What were you saying?" said Père Grandet, carefully folding the letter in the same folds and putting it in his waistcoat pocket.

He looked at his nephew with a humble, timid expression, beneath which he concealed his emotions and schemes.

"Are you warm?"

"Very comfortable, my dear uncle."

"Well, well, where are our ladies?" said the uncle, forgetting already that his nephew was to sleep beneath his roof.

At that moment Eugénie and Madame Grandet returned.

"Is everything ready upstairs?" the miser inquired, recovering his self-possession.

"Yes, father."

"Well, nephew, if you're tired, Nanon will show you to your room. It won't be a fine gentleman's apartment, faith! but you will excuse a poor vine-dresser who hasn't a sou. Taxes swallow up everything."

"We don't wish to intrude, Grandet," said the banker. "You may want to talk with your nephew, so we will bid you good-night. Until to-morrow."

At that, the whole party rose, and everyone made a reverence in accordance with his or her character. The old notary went to the door for his lantern and returned to light it, offering to escort the Des Grassins. Madame des Grassins had not foreseen the incident that was destined to bring the festivities to an untimely end, and her servant had not arrived.

"Will you do me the honor to accept my arm, madame?" said Abbé Cruchot.

"Thanks, Monsieur l'Abbé, my son is here," she replied dryly.

"Ladies cannot compromise their reputations with me," said the abbé.

"Pray accept Monsieur Cruchot's escort," said her husband.

The abbé led the pretty little woman away rapidly enough to gain a few steps on the rest of the party.

"That's a very attractive young man," said he, pressing her arm. "Adieu to hope, all is over. You must say adieu to Mademoiselle Grandet; Eugénie will fall to the Parisian. Unless this cousin happens to be in love with some woman in Paris, your son Adolphe will find in him a redoubtable rival."

"Never fear, Monsieur l'Abbé. That young man won't be long in finding out that Eugénie's a simpleton, a poor, faded creature. Did you notice her? She was as yellow as a quince to-night."

"Perhaps you called the cousin's attention to it?"

"And I didn't stand upon ceremony either."

"Always sit beside Eugénie, madame, and you won't need to say much to the young man against his cousin; he will make comparisons on his own account that will—"

"First of all he promised to dine with me the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! if you chose, madame—" said the abbé.

"Pray, what would you have me choose, Monsieur l'Abbé? Do you intend to give me bad advice? I haven't reached the age of thirty-nine, with a spotless reputation, thank God! to compromise it now, even to win the Great Mogul's empire. We are both old enough to know what words mean. You have very incongruous ideas for an ecclesiastic, on my word. Fie! that is worthy of Faublas."

"Then you have read *Faublas?*"

"No, Monsieur l'Abbé; I meant to say *Les Liaisons Dangereuses.*"

"Ah! that book is infinitely more moral," said the abbé with a laugh. "But you make me out as sinful as the young men of to-day! I simply intended to—"

"Dare to tell me that you hadn't it in mind to suggest a villainous thing to me. Isn't it very clear? If this young man, who is very agreeable, I admit, should pay court to me, he would not think of his cousin. In Paris, I know, some fond mothers sacrifice themselves in that way for the welfare and fortune of their children; but we are in the provinces, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"Yes, madame."

"And," she continued, "I would not want, nor would Adolphe, a hundred millions purchased at that price."

"Madame, I didn't mention a hundred millions. The temptation would perhaps have been beyond the strength of either of us to resist. But I do think that a virtuous woman may allow herself,

with perfect propriety, some trifling acts of coquetry which are a part of her social duties, and which—"

"You think so?"

"Is it not our duty, madame, to strive to make ourselves agreeable to one another?—Permit me to blow my nose.—I assure you, madame," he continued, "that his expression when he looked at you was a little more flattering than that he bestowed upon me; but I forgive him for giving beauty the preference over old age."

"It is clear," said the president in his loud voice, "that Monsieur Grandet of Paris has sent his son to Saumur with very matrimonial intentions."

"But in that case the cousin wouldn't have fallen into the house like a bomb," the notary suggested.

"That doesn't prove anything," said Monsieur des Grassins; "the excellent man is a *mystery-monger*."

"Des Grassins, my dear, I have invited that young man to dinner. You must go and ask Monsieur and Madame de Larsonnière and the Du Hautoys, with that pretty Mademoiselle du Hautoy, of course; provided that she will dress decently that day! Her mother dresses her so vilely, through jealousy!—I trust, messieurs, that we shall have the honor of your company," she added, stopping the procession to turn and face the two Cruchots.

"Here we are at your house, madame," said the notary.

Having saluted the three Des Grassins, the three Cruchots returned home, making use of that genius

of analysis that provincials possess, to study in all its phases the great event of the evening, which changed the respective positions of the Cruchotins and the Grassinistes. The admirable good sense that guided the actions of these great schemers, made them all feel the necessity of a temporary alliance against the common enemy. Must they not work together to prevent Eugénie from loving her cousin, and Charles from thinking of his cousin? Could the Parisian resist the perfidious insinuations, the sugar-coated calumnies, the damning with faint praise, the ingenuous contradictions which were to beset him from morning till night for the purpose of deceiving him?

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When the four relations were left alone in the *salle*, Monsieur Grandet said to his nephew:

"It's bedtime. It's too late now to talk over the business that brings you here; we will find a convenient time to-morrow. We breakfast at eight o'clock. At noon we take a bite of bread and a little fruit, and drink a glass of white wine; then we dine, as they do in Paris, at five o'clock. That's the programme. If you care to see the city or the suburbs, you will be free as the air. You will excuse me if my engagements don't always permit me to accompany you. It may be that you'll hear everybody say I am rich: 'Monsieur Grandet this, and Monsieur Grandet that!' I let them talk, their clatter doesn't injure my credit. But I haven't a sou, and I work, old as I am, like a young man who has nothing of his own but a dull plane and two strong arms. Perhaps you'll find out for yourself before long what a crown costs when you have to sweat for it.—Come, Nanon, the candles!"

"I hope you will find everything you need, nephew," said Madame Grandet; "but, if there's anything you want, you can call Nanon."

"It would be hard for me to think of anything I lack, my dear aunt; I brought all my own things, I believe! Allow me to bid you and my young cousin good-night."

Charles took from Nanon's hand a lighted wax candle,—an Anjou candle that had turned yellow from lying a long while in the shop and was so like the ordinary tallow dip, that Monsieur Grandet, who had no reason to suspect the presence of such a thing in the house, did not notice the extravagance.

"I'll show you the way," he said.

Instead of going out through the door that led into the vestibule, Grandet ceremoniously led the way into the passage between the living-room and the kitchen. Folding doors with large oval panes of glass in the wings separated this passage from the main hall, in order to keep out the cold that rushed in there in gusts. But in winter the north wind whistled through the chinks none the less, and despite the list placed about the doors of the *salle,* it was hard to maintain a respectable degree of warmth in the room. Nanon went to bolt the front door, locked the doors of the *salle* and unfastened a wolf-dog that was kept in the stable by day, and whose voice was as cracked as if he were suffering from laryngitis. This animal, renowned for his ferocity, knew nobody but Nanon. The two rural creatures had a perfect understanding.

When Charles saw the yellow, smoke-begrimed walls of the cage where the old staircase with its worm-eaten rail was trembling beneath his uncle's heavy step, his disillusionment progressed rapidly. He began to think that he was in a hen-house. His aunt and his cousin, to whom he turned to question their faces, were so accustomed to the stairway that

they failed to understand the cause of his surprise, and mistaking his glance for an expression of affection, they replied with a pleasant smile that drove him to despair.

"What the devil did father send me here for?" he said to himself.

When they reached the first landing, he saw three doors painted an Etruscan red, doors without frames, buried in the dusty wall and bound with bands of iron bolted on, in plain sight, and ending in diverging rays, which was true also of the long keyhole shield. The door at the head of the stairs, which opened into the room over the kitchen, was evidently nailed up. There was no way of entering the room, which Grandet used as an office, except through his bedroom. The only window by which it was lighted looked on the courtyard, and was protected by enormous iron bars running in both directions. No one, not even Madame Grandet, was allowed to enter the room; the goodman chose to be entirely alone there, like an alchemist at his furnace. Doubtless there was some cleverly devised secret cupboard there, in which his title deeds were stored, and there the scales with which he weighed his louis; there, nightly and in secret, he prepared his releases and receipts, and made his plans; so that the men with whom he did business, finding Grandet always ready for anything, might well believe that he had a fairy or a demon at his orders. There, doubtless, when Nanon was snoring loud enough to shake the ceiling, when the wolf-dog was

watching and yawning in the courtyard, when Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet were sound asleep, the old cooper handled and caressed and gloated over his gold, and watched it ferment and put hoops about it. The walls were thick, the shutters told no tales. He alone had the key to that laboratory, where, people said, he pored over plans on which his fruit trees were all set down, and where he figured out his crops to a vine sprig, almost to a faggot.

The door of Eugénie's bedroom was opposite the walled-up door. At the end of the landing was the apartment of the husband and wife, who occupied the whole front of the house. Madame Grandet had a room adjoining Eugénie's, with a glass door between. The master's bedroom was separated from his wife's by a partition, and from the mysterious cabinet by a thick wall. Père Grandet had quartered his nephew on the second floor, in the high attic above his own room, so that he could hear him if he should take it into his head to go and come at unseasonable hours.

When Eugénie and her mother reached the middle of the landing, they exchanged a good-night kiss; and, after a few parting words with Charles, cold on the lips, but certainly warm in the girl's heart, they entered their respective apartments.

"Here you are, nephew," said Père Grandet to Charles, throwing open his door. "If you want to go out, you must call Nanon. If she isn't there, farewell! the dog would eat you up without a word.

Sleep well. Good-night.—Aha! those women have made a fire for you," he added.

At that moment tall Nanon appeared, armed with a warming-pan.

"Well, here's another!" said Grandet. "Do you take my nephew for a woman in childbed? Be kind enough to take away your chafing-dish, Nanon!"

"But the sheets are damp, monsieur, and this gentleman is as delicate as a woman."

"Well, go on, as long as you have it in your head," said Grandet, taking her by the shoulders and pushing her forward; "but be careful not to set anything on fire."

With that the miser went down the stairs, mumbling indistinguishable words.

Charles stood aghast in the midst of his trunks. Having cast his eyes upon the walls of the attic chamber, covered with a yellow-flowered paper such as one sees in cheap wine shops, upon a fluted freestone mantel, the bare aspect of which made him shiver, upon varnished cane-seated chairs of yellow wood, which seemed to have more than four corners, upon an open night-table in which a short sergeant of infantry could have stood upright, and upon the meagre list carpet at the foot of a canopied bed with cloth valances that trembled as if they were on the point of falling, destroyed by the worms, he looked at Nanon with a serious face, and said to her:

"Tell me, my dear child, am I really at Monsieur Grandet's, the former mayor of Saumur, brother of Monsieur Grandet of Paris?"

"Yes, monsieur, a very amiable, very pleasant, very perfect gentleman. Shall I help you to unpack your boxes?"

"Faith, I wish you would, my old trooper! Did you never serve in the marines of the Garde Impériale?"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" said Nanon, "what's the marines of the Garde? Is it salted? Does it go on the water?"

"Here, find my dressing-gown in that valise. Here's the key."

Nanon was struck dumb at the sight of a dressing-gown of green silk with gold flowers and antique designs.

"Are you going to put that on to sleep in?" said she.

"Yes."

"Holy Virgin! what a fine altar front that would make for the parish church! Come, my dear little monsieur, give it to the church and you'll save your soul, but you'll lose it if you wear that. Oh! how nice you look, like that! I'm going to call mademoiselle to look at you."

"Come, come, Nanon, as Nanon it is, be kind enough to keep quiet! Let me go to bed; I'll arrange my things to-morrow, and if my gown pleases you so much you shall save your soul. I'm too good a Christian to refuse it to you when I go away, and you can do whatever you please with it."

Nanon stood like a statue, staring at Charles, unable to credit his words.

"Give me that lovely thing!" she said, turning to go. "The man's dreaming already. Good-night."

"Good-night, Nanon.—What have I come here for?" said Charles to himself, as he was falling asleep. "My father's no fool and my journey must have some object. Pshaw! 'Let grave affairs go till to-morrow,' as some old Greek idiot or other said."

"Holy Virgin! how nice my cousin is!" said Eugénie to herself, interrupting her prayers, which were not finished that night.

Madame Grandet had nothing special in her mind when she went to bed. Through the door in the centre of the partition, she could hear the miser walking back and forth in his room. Like all timid women, she had studied the character of her lord and master. As the sea-gull foresees the coming storm, she had, by imperceptible signs, foreseen the internal tempest that was agitating Grandet, and, to use the expression she used herself, she feigned death.

Grandet looked at the zinc-lined door of his cabinet and said to himself:

"What a strange idea of my brother's to leave his child to me! A fine inheritance! I haven't twenty crowns to give him. But what are twenty crowns to this young dandy, who eyed my barometer as if he wanted to throw it into the fire?"

As he reflected on the consequences of that sorrow-laden testament, Grandet became more agitated perhaps than his brother was when he wrote it.

"Shall I have that gold gown—?" said Nanon; and she fell asleep, dressed in her altar cloth, and dreaming of flowers, tapestry and damask for the first time in her life, as Eugénie dreamed of love.

In the chaste, monotonous life of young girls, there comes a delicious hour when the sun pours its beams into the heart, when the flower expresses its thoughts to them, when the palpitating heart imparts its ardent fecundity to the brain and confuses the ideas in a vague longing. O day of innocent melancholy and delicious joy! When children begin to see, they smile; when a maiden catches a glimpse of sentiment in nature, she smiles as she smiled in childhood. If light is the first love of life, is not love the light of the heart? The moment for attaining a clear perception of earthly things had arrived for Eugénie. Being an early bird, like all provincial maidens, she rose betimes, said her prayers, and began to make her toilet, an operation that had some meaning for her thenceforth. First of all she braided her chestnut hair and twisted the thick braids together on top of her head with the greatest care, making sure that no stray locks should escape from their tresses; a symmetrical arrangement that set off the innocent timidity of her face by producing perfect harmony between the simplicity of the accessories and the ingenuousness of the features. As she washed her hands again and again in the pure water that hardened and reddened the skin, she glanced at her lovely round arms, and wondered what her cousin did to have

such soft white hands and such beautiful nails. She put on new stockings and her prettiest shoes. She laced herself tight, without passing over any eyelets. Lastly, as she desired, for the first time in her life, to appear at her best, she did not forget the advantage of wearing a dainty, well-made dress, which would enhance her attractions. When her toilet was finished, she heard the church clock strike, and was amazed when she counted only seven strokes. Her anxiety to have all the necessary time for dressing properly, had led her to rise too early. Knowing nothing of the art of arranging a lock of hair ten times over and studying its effect, Eugénie simply folded her arms, sat down at her windows and gazed at the courtyard, the small garden and the high terraces that overlooked it; a depressing, contracted view, which was not, however, wholly devoid of the mysterious beauties peculiar to solitary spots or to nature in a wild state. Near the kitchen was a well, surrounded by a curb, and with a pulley for the bucket rope fastened to a bent iron rod, which was almost hidden from sight by a vine whose leaves were withered, reddened and blighted by the weather; thence, the twisted branches jumped to the wall, clung closely to it, ran the whole length of the house and came to an end upon a wood-pile, where the wood was arranged with as much precision as a bibliophile's books could be. The pavement of the courtyard was of that dark color produced in course of time by moss and weeds and lack of use. The

thick walls presented their cloak of green, intersected with long, undulating brown lines. The eight steps at the end of the courtyard, leading to the garden gate, were disjointed and buried under towering weeds, like the tomb of a knight interred by his widow in the days of the Crusades. Above a course of worn, weather-beaten stones, rose a wicket of rotten wood, half-fallen from old age, and covered by interlacing, climbing plants. On each side of the open-work gate two stunted apple trees protruded their gnarled branches. Three parallel graveled paths, separated by square plots with a border of box, composed the garden, which ended in a clump of lindens at the foot of the terrace. At one end raspberry bushes; at the other, an immense walnut tree whose branches reached to the cooper's cabinet. A clear day and the bright sunlight of autumn as it should be on the banks of the Loire, were beginning to dissipate the hoar frost deposited during the night on the various picturesque objects, the walls, and the weeds that filled the garden and the courtyard.

Eugénie discovered fresh charm in the aspect of all these things, that were but yesterday so commonplace in her eyes. A thousand confused thoughts were born in her heart, and grew in strength as the sun's rays gave out more heat. She felt that thrill of vague, inexplicable pleasure that envelops the moral being as a cloud would envelop the physical being. Her reflections were in accord with the details of the strange outlook from

her window, and the harmonies of her heart were allied with the harmonies of nature. When the sun reached a corner of the wall from which fell a maiden-hair fern, with its thick foliage and colors changing like a pigeon's throat, celestial beams of hope illumined the future for Eugénie, who thenceforth took pleasure in gazing at that corner, its pale flowers, its bluebells and its withered weeds, with which a memory as sweet as those of childhood was entwined. The sound made by each falling leaf in that resonant courtyard answered the secret questions of the young girl, who would have sat there all day, regardless of the flight of time. Then came tumultuous commotions of the heart. She rose frequently, stood before her mirror and contemplated herself therein, as an honest author contemplates his work to criticize and malign himself.

"I am not pretty enough for him—!" such was Eugénie's thought, a humble thought and fruitful of suffering. The poor girl did not do herself justice; but modesty, or rather timidity, is one of the greatest virtues of love. Eugénie belonged to that type of maidens, stoutly built, as maidens are wont to be in the petty bourgeoisie, and whose points of beauty seem commonplace at first sight; but if she resembled the Venus de Milo, her figure was ennobled by the grace of Christian sentiment, which purifies woman, and imparts a distinction unknown to the ancient sculptors. She had an enormous head, the masculine, but refined, forehead of Phidias's Jupiter, and gray eyes to which her virtuous life,

finding its fullest expression therein, imparted a brilliant light. The features of her round, and formerly fresh and rosy face, had grown somewhat coarse as a result of the smallpox, that was merciful enough to leave no marks, but had destroyed the velvety smoothness of the skin, which was however still so soft and fine that her mother's pure kiss left only a momentary redness. Her nose was a little too long, but it harmonized with a mouth of the color of red lead, whose lips, marked with countless little lines, were instinct with love and kindness of heart. The neck was exquisitely rounded. The swelling corsage, carefully covered, attracted the eye and made one muse; doubtless it lacked something of the grace due to the toilet; but, to a connoisseur, the non-flexibility of that tall figure would certainly be a charm. Eugénie, then, was tall and strong, and had none of the prettiness that attracts the masses; but she was beautiful with that style of beauty which is so easy to recognize, and with which none but artists fall in love. The painter who seeks on earth a type of the celestial purity of Mary, who inquires of all womankind for those eyes, proud yet modest, that Raphael divined, those virgin outlines often due to the hazards of conception, but which a chaste and Christian life alone can preserve or acquire; that painter, enamored of so rare a model, would have found at one stroke in Eugénie's face the innate nobility of ignorance; he would have seen a world of love beneath a placid brow, and, in the shape of the

eyes, in the movement of the lids, something almost divine. Her features, the outlines of her head, which had never been marred or changed by the expression of pleasure, resembled the horizon line stretching unbroken along the surface of a placid sea. That calm, ruddy face, set in a border of light, like a pretty flower just opened to the sun, brought rest to the mind, communicated the charm of the conscience that was reflected therein, and compelled attention. Eugénie was still upon the shore of life, where childish illusions flourish, where daisies are plucked with a delight that is unknown later in life. And so she said, as she looked at herself in the mirror, still knowing nothing of what love was:

"I am too ugly, he won't take any notice of me!"

Then she opened her door, which communicated with the hall, and put out her head to listen to the sounds in the house.

"He isn't getting up," she thought, as she heard Nanon's morning cough and the honest creature going and coming, sweeping the living-room, lighting her fire, chaining up the dog and talking to her animals in the stable.

Eugénie at once ran downstairs to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

"Nanon, dear Nanon, do make some cream for my cousin's coffee."

"Why, mademoiselle, I'd have had to set it yesterday," said Nanon, with a roar of laughter. "I can't make cream. Your cousin is a darling, a darling, a real darling. You didn't see him in his

silk chamber-gown. I saw him. He wears linen as fine as Monsieur le Curé's surplice."

"Let's make some cake, Nanon."

"Who'll give me wood for the oven, and flour, and butter?" said Nanon, who, in the capacity of Grandet's prime minister, sometimes assumed enormous importance in the eyes of Eugénie and her mother. "Must I steal from that man to feed your cousin? Ask him for butter and flour and wood; he's your father and he may give 'em to you. See, there he is coming down to look after the provisions."

Eugénie fled into the garden, alarmed beyond measure, when she heard the staircase trembling under her father's footsteps. She was already experiencing the effects of the profound modesty and the self-consciousness characteristic of happiness, which lead us to believe, not without reason perhaps, that our thoughts are engraved on our foreheads and stare other people in the face. Upon taking notice for the first time of the cold, bare aspect of her father's house, the poor girl was conscious of a feeling of vexation because she could not make it harmonize with her cousin's refined appearance. She felt a passionate longing to do something for him: but what? that she did not know. Artless and sincere, she yielded to the impulses of her angelic nature, without distrust of her impressions or her sentiments. The mere sight of her cousin had awakened within her the natural inclinations of woman, and they were likely to develop

with the greater force because, having attained her twenty-third year, she was in the plenitude of her intelligence and her desires.

For the first time she was afraid at the sight of her father, saw in him the arbiter of her destiny, and believed that she was committing a sin in concealing some of her thoughts from him. She began to walk hurriedly back and forth, amazed to find the air she breathed purer, the rays of the sun more vivifying, and to draw therefrom a mental warmth, a new life.

While she was trying to devise some artifice to obtain the cake, there arose between tall Nanon and Grandet one of those disputes which were as rare between them as swallows are in winter. Armed with his keys, the goodman had come to measure out the necessary provisions for the day's consumption.

"Is there any bread left from yesterday?" he asked Nanon.

"Not a crumb, monsieur."

Grandet took a coarse round loaf, well sprinkled with flour, and baked in one of the flat pans used by bakers in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon said:

"There are five of us to-day, monsieur."

"True," Grandet rejoined, "but your loaf weighs six pounds and there'll be some left over. Besides, you will see that these young men from Paris don't eat bread."

"Then they eat *frippe*, I suppose?" said Nanon.

In Anjou, *frippe*, a word found in the vocabulary

of slang terms, expresses the usual accompaniments of bread, from the butter spread upon it—the ordinary *frippe*—to peach preserve,—the most distinguished of *frippes;* and all those who, in their childhood, have licked off the *frippe* and left the bread will understand the full meaning of the expression.

"No," retorted Grandet, "they don't eat bread or *frippe.* They're like unmarried girls."

At last, after he had provided for the daily *menu* in parsimonious fashion, the goodman was about to betake himself to his orchard, having carefully locked the cupboards in his buttery, when Nanon stopped him to say:

"Give me some flour and butter, monsieur, and I'll make a cake for the children."

"Do you propose to pillage my house on account of my nephew?"

"I wasn't thinking of your nephew any more than of your dog; no more than you think of him yourself—Here you've only put out six pieces of sugar! I must have eight."

"Look here, Nanon, I never saw you like this. What's got into your head, pray? Are you mistress here? You shan't have but six pieces of sugar."

"Well then, what will your nephew sugar his coffee with?"

"With two pieces; I'll go without."

"You go without sugar at your age! I'd rather buy you some out of my own pocket."

"Mind your own business!"

Notwithstanding the fall in price, sugar was still the most precious of colonial products in the cooper's eyes; to him it was still worth six francs a pound. The obligation to use it sparingly, assumed under the Empire, had become the most ineradicable of his habits. All women, even the most stupid, can resort to strategy to obtain their ends: Nanon abandoned the question of sugar in order to obtain the cake.

"Mademoiselle," she shouted through the window, "don't you want some cake?"

"No, no," Eugénie replied.

"Here, Nanon," said Grandet, when he heard his daughter's voice, "here, take it."

He opened the cupboard in which the flour was kept and gave her a small quantity, and added a few ounces of butter to the piece he had already cut.

"I must have wood to heat the oven," said the implacable Nanon.

"Very well, take what you need," he replied in a melancholy tone; "but in that case you will make me a fruit tart, and cook the whole dinner in the oven; in that way you needn't light two fires."

"*Quien!*" cried Nanon, "you needn't tell me that."

Grandet bestowed an almost paternal glance upon his faithful minister.

"Mademoiselle," she cried, "we'll have a cake."

Père Grandet returned laden with fruit, and arranged a plateful on the kitchen table.

"Just see what pretty boots your nephew has, monsieur!" said Nanon. "What leather, and how good they smell! What do they clean them with? Shall I put on some of your egg dressing?"

"I think the egg would spoil that leather, Nanon. Just tell him that you don't understand dressing morocco—yes, it's morocco; he can buy something himself in Saumur to shine his boots with, and bring it to you. I've heard that they mix sugar with their dressing to give it a gloss."

"Then it's good to eat, is it?" said the servant, putting the boot to her nose. "*Quien, quien!* they smell of Madame's eau de Cologne! Ah! that's a funny thing."

"Funny!" said her master, "you think it's funny, do you, to put more money in a pair of boots than the man that wears them is worth?"

"Monsieur," said she, when the master returned from his second journey to the orchard to lock the gate, "won't you have boiled meat for dinner once or twice a week, on account of your—?"

"Yes."

"Shall I go to the butcher's?"

"Not at all; you can make some chicken broth; the farmers will keep you supplied. But I'll go and tell Cornoiller to kill me some crows. That game makes the best broth on earth."

"Is it true that they eat dead things, monsieur?"

"You're a fool, Nanon! They eat what they can find, like everybody else. Don't we live on the dead? What are inheritances, pray?"

Père Grandet, having no further orders to give, looked at his watch, and, finding that he still had half an hour at his disposal before breakfast, he took his hat and kissed his daughter.

"Do you want to take a walk through my fields on the bank of the Loire?" he said. "I have something to do there."

Eugénie went to put on her hat of stitched straw, lined with pink silk; then the father and daughter walked down the winding street to the square.

"Where are you going so early?" said the notary Cruchot, whom they met on the way.

"To see something," the goodman replied, not at all deceived as to his friend's early promenade.

When Père Grandet was going to see something, the notary knew by experience that there was always something to be made in his company. Therefore he accompanied him.

"Come, Cruchot," said Grandet to the notary. "You're a friend of mine; I am going to show you what a crazy idea it is to plant poplars in good land."

"You make no account then of the sixty thousand francs you fingered for those you had in your fields on the Loire?" said Master Cruchot, opening his eyes in amazement. "What luck you had!—To cut your trees just when there was a demand for white wood at Nantes, and sell them at thirty francs!"

Eugénie listened, unconscious that the most solemn moment of her life was approaching and that the notary was about to give occasion for the

pronouncement of a sovereign, paternal decree concerning her. They had reached the magnificent fields owned by Grandet on the Loire, where thirty workmen were engaged clearing away, filling in and leveling the ground formerly occupied by the poplars.

"You see, Master Cruchot, a poplar takes room," said Grandet.—"Jean," he cried to a workman, "m-m-measure the whole p-p-place with your p-p-pole!"

"Four times eight feet," said the man when he had finished.

"Thirty-two feet wasted," Grandet remarked to Cruchot. "I had three hundred p-p-poplars on this line, d-d-didn't I? Now, th-th-three hundred times thirty-t-wo feet eat up f-f-five hundred of hay; add twice as m-m-much on the sides, fifteen hundred; the sp-sp-aces in the middle as m-m-much again. Suppose we say a th-th-ousand trusses of hay."

"Well," said Cruchot, to assist his friend, "a thousand trusses of that hay are worth about six hundred francs."

"Say t-t-twelve hundred, with the s-s-s-econd crop. Well, reckon up what t-t-welve hundred f-f-francs a year w-w-ould amount to for forty years, with c-c-com-p-pound interest, you kn-know."

"Call it sixty thousand francs," said the notary.

"I believe you! that will m-make only s-s-ixty thousand francs. Well," continued the vinedresser, no longer stuttering, "two thousand poplars wouldn't give fifty thousand francs in forty years.

There's a loss. I have found that out," said Grandet emphatically.—"Jean," he continued, "you will fill up the holes except those on the edge of the river, where you will plant the poplars I have bought. If I put their feet in the river, they'll be watered at the expense of the government," he added, turning to Cruchot with a slight movement of the wen on his nose that was equivalent to the most ironical of smiles.

"This much is certain: poplars ought to be planted only in poor ground," said Cruchot, dumfounded by Grandet's shrewd calculations.

"*Y-y-yes, monsieur,*" retorted the cooper ironically.

Eugénie, who was gazing at the sublime Loire landscape, and not listening to her father's schemes, began to pay close attention when she heard Cruchot say to his client:

"Well, you have sent for a son-in-law from Paris, I see; everybody in Saumur is talking about your nephew. I suppose I shall soon have a contract to draw, eh! Père Grandet?"

"You c-c-came out very early in the m-m-m-orning to t-t-tell me that," said Grandet, accompanying the retort with a twitch of his nose. "Well, my old c-c-omrade, I will be frank with you, and t-t-tell you what you w-want to kn-know. Look you, I would r-r-rather throw my g-g-irl into the Loire than g-g-give her to her c-c-c-ousin; you can s-s-say that f-f-from me. But no, let p-p-people chatter."

This reply made Eugénie's head swim. The far-off hopes that were beginning to sprout in her heart suddenly grew to maturity, were fulfilled and formed a bunch of flowers that she now saw lying crushed and broken on the ground. Since the night before, she had attached herself to Charles by all the bonds of happiness by which hearts are united; henceforth they were to be strengthened by suffering. Is it not a part of woman's noble destiny to be more deeply touched by the pomp of misery than by the splendors of great fortune? How could the paternal sentiment have been extinguished in her father's heart? Of what crime was Charles guilty? Mysterious questions! Already her newborn love, itself a profound mystery, was enveloped in mysteries. She returned home with her legs trembling beneath her, and upon reaching the old gloomy street, usually so joyous in her eyes, it bore a sad aspect to her; she breathed the melancholy that time and events had impressed upon it. None of the symptoms of love were missing.

A few steps from the house she ran ahead of her father and waited for him at the door after knocking. But Grandet, who saw a newspaper still in its cover in the notary's hand, said to him:

"How are the Funds?"

"You won't listen to me, Grandet," replied Cruchot. "Buy at once, I say; you can still make twenty per cent in two years, besides the interest at a high rate; five thousand francs a year on

twenty-four thousand. The Funds are eighty francs fifty centimes."

"We shall see," said Grandet, rubbing his chin.

"My God!" exclaimed the notary, who had opened his paper.

"Well, what is it?" cried Grandet, as Cruchot held the paper before his eyes, saying: "Read that article."

"Monsieur Grandet, one of the most highly esteemed merchants in Paris, blew out his brains yesterday after making his customary appearance at the Bourse. He had sent his resignation to the president of the Chamber of Deputies, and had also resigned his functions as judge of the tribunal of commerce. The failures of Messieurs Roguin and Souchet, his broker and his notary, ruined him. The consideration in which Monsieur Grandet was held and his credit were such that he could undoubtedly have procured assistance on the street. It is to be regretted that this honorable man yielded to the first impulse of despair," etc.

"I knew it," said the old vinedresser.

That remark froze Master Cruchot, who, notwithstanding his notarial impassibility, felt a shiver run down his back at the thought that the Paris Grandet had perhaps appealed in vain to the millions of the Saumur Grandet.

"And his son, who was so light-hearted yesterday—?"

"He knows nothing as yet," Grandet replied with the same calm demeanor.

"Adieu, Monsieur Grandet," said Cruchot, who understood the whole affair and went home to reassure Président de Bonfons.

*

On entering the house Grandet found the breakfast ready. Madame Grandet was already in her raised chair knitting winter sleeves, when Eugénie threw her arms about her neck and kissed her with the eager effusion due to secret unhappiness.

"You can eat your breakfast," said Nanon, coming down the stairs four at a time, "the child is sleeping like a cherub. How pretty he is with his eyes shut! I went in and called him. Oh yes! no answer."

"Let him sleep," said Grandet, "he'll wake soon enough to learn bad news."

"What has happened?" asked Eugénie, dropping in her coffee the small bits of sugar, weighing no one knows how many grammes, which her father cut for amusement in his leisure hours.

Madame Grandet, who had not dared to ask the question, looked at her husband.

"His father has blown his brains out."

"My uncle?" said Eugénie.

"The poor young man!" cried Madame Grandet.

"Poor indeed," rejoined Grandet; "he hasn't a sou."

"Well, he sleeps as if he was the king of the earth," said Nanon softly.

Eugénie ceased to eat. Her heart was oppressed

as the heart is wont to be when, for the first time, compassion, aroused by the misfortune of the man she loves, spreads through a woman's whole being. The girl wept.

"You didn't know your uncle, why do you weep?" said her father, glaring at her like a hungry tiger, as he doubtless glared at his heaps of gold.

"But, monsieur," said the servant, "who wouldn't feel pity for the poor young man who sleeps like a top and don't know what's in store for him?"

"I didn't speak to you, Nanon! hold your tongue."

Eugénie learned at that moment that the woman who loves should always dissemble her feelings. She did not reply.

"Until I return you will say nothing to him about it, I hope, Madame Grandet," continued the old man. "I am obliged to go and attend to the marking out of the ditch along the edge of my meadows on the road. I shall return at noon in time for the second breakfast, and I'll talk with my nephew then about his affairs.—As for you, Mademoiselle Eugénie, if you're weeping for that young sprig, that's enough of that, my child. He'll be off post-haste for the Indies. You'll never see him again."

The father took his gloves from his hat brim, put them on with his habitual tranquillity, dovetailed his fingers together to force them well in, and left the house.

"Oh! mamma, I am choking!" cried Eugénie,

when she was alone with her mother. "I have never suffered so."

Madame Grandet, seeing that her daughter had turned pale, opened the window so that she could breathe the fresh air.

"I am better," said Eugénie after a moment.

This nervous excitement in one whose nature had hitherto seemed so calm and cold reacted upon Madame Grandet, who gazed at her daughter with the sympathetic intuition with which mothers are endowed touching the object of their affection, and divined the whole truth. Indeed, the lives of the famous Hungarian sisters, who were attached to each other by an error of nature, were not more interwoven than those of Eugénie and her mother, who were always together in the window recess, together in church, and who slept in the same atmosphere.

"My poor child!" said Madame Grandet, taking Eugénie's head and resting it against her breast.

At those words the girl raised her head, questioned her mother with a look, sought to divine her secret thoughts, and said:

"Why send him to the Indies? If he is unfortunate, oughtn't he to remain here? isn't he our nearest relation?"

"Yes, my child, that would be very natural; but your father has his reasons and we must respect them."

The mother and the daughter seated themselves in silence, one in her raised chair, the other in her

little armchair, and both took up their work. Overwhelmed with gratitude for the perfect sympathy her mother had displayed, Eugénie kissed her hand, saying:

"How good you are, dear mamma!"

The words brought a joyful gleam to the mother's face, worn by suffering long-endured.

"Do you feel well?" Eugénie asked her.

Madame Grandet replied only with a smile; after a moment's silence she said in an undertone:

"Can it be that you love him already? That would be wrong."

"Wrong," rejoined Eugénie, "why? you like him and Nanon likes him, why shouldn't I? Come, mamma, let us set the table for his breakfast."

She put aside her work and her mother did the same.

"You are mad!" she said.

But she chose to justify her daughter's madness by sharing it.

Eugénie called Nanon.

"What do you want now, mademoiselle?"

"Nanon, you will certainly have some cream for this noon?"

"For this noon, oh! yes," replied the old servant.

"Well, give him some very strong coffee; I have heard Monsieur des Grassins say that they made coffee very strong in Paris. Put in a lot."

"Where do you suppose I'm going to get it?"

"Buy some."

"And suppose I should meet monsieur?"

"He's at the meadow."

"I'll run right away. But Monsieur Fessard asked me if the three Magi were at our house when he gave me the candle. The whole town will know what we're doing."

"If your father notices anything," said Madame Grandet, "he is quite capable of beating us."

"Well, if he beats us, we will receive his blows on our knees."

Madame Grandet's only reply was to raise her eyes to heaven. Nanon took her hood and went out. Eugénie spread a white cloth on the table and went to get some of the bunches of grapes she had amused herself by hanging on a cord in the loft: she walked softly along the corridor in order not to awaken her cousin, and could not resist the temptation to listen at his door to his regular breathing.

"Misfortune hovers over him while he sleeps," she said.

She took the greenest leaves from the vine, arranged her grapes as daintily as an old hand at the business could have done, and triumphantly placed them on the table. In the kitchen, she laid an impious hand on the pears her father had counted out, and arranged them in a pyramid among the leaves. She came and went and ran and leaped. She would have liked to drain her father's house dry; but he had all the keys. Nanon returned with two fresh eggs. When Eugénie saw them she longed to fall upon her neck.

"The farmer from La Lande had them in his

basket, I asked him for them, and he gave them to me to please me, the darling."

After two hours of labor, during which Eugénie left her work twenty times to go and watch the coffee boil or to listen to the sounds her cousin made upon leaving his bed, she succeeded in preparing a very simple and inexpensive breakfast, but one which was a startling innovation upon the inveterate habits of the household. The noon breakfast was eaten standing. Each one took a little bread, some preserve or butter, and a glass of wine. When she saw the table set beside the fire, one of the armchairs placed in front of her cousin's cover, the two plates of fruit, the egg cup, the bottle of white wine, the bread, and the sugar heaped up in a saucer, Eugénie trembled in every limb at the bare thought of the way her father would glare at her if he should happen to come in at that moment. So she kept glancing at the clock, calculating whether her cousin could finish his breakfast before the good man's return.

"Don't be frightened, Eugénie; if your father comes I will take it all on myself," said Madame Grandet.

Eugénie could not restrain a tear.

"Oh! my dear mother," she cried, "I have never loved you enough!"

Charles, after a thousand turns back and forth in his bedroom, singing to himself, made his appearance at last. Luckily it was only eleven o'clock. The dandy! he had taken as much pains with his

costume as if he were staying at the château of the noble lady who was traveling in Scotland. He entered the room with the affable, smiling manner that is so becoming to youth and that afforded Eugénie a melancholy pleasure. He had taken in good part the destruction of his castles in Anjou, and he accosted his aunt in high good humor.

"Did you sleep well, my dear aunt? And you, cousin?"

"Very well, monsieur; but you?" said Madame Grandet.

"I, oh! perfectly."

"You must be hungry, cousin," said Eugénie; "won't you take a seat at the table."

"But I never breakfast until noon, when I usually get up. However I fared so badly on the way that I don't mind. At all events—"

He consulted the sweetest little watch that Bréguet ever made.

"Look, it's only eleven o'clock; I am very early."

"Early?" said Madame Grandet.

"Yes, but I wanted to put my things in order. However, I will gladly eat a little something, a trifle, a chicken wing, a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" cried Nanon, when she heard those words.

"A partridge," said Eugénie to herself; she would have been glad to expend her little all on a partridge.

"Come and sit down," said his aunt.

The dandy sank into the chair like a pretty woman posing on her divan. Eugénie and her mother took their chairs and sat near him, in front of the fire.

"Do you live here all the time?" said Charles, to whom the *salle* seemed even uglier by daylight than by candlelight.

"All the time," Eugénie replied, looking up at him, "except during the harvest. Then we go and help Nanon, and we all stay at the Abbaye of Noyers."

"Do you never go to walk?"

"Sometimes on Sunday, after vespers, when the weather is fine," said Madame Grandet, "we go on the bridge, or to see the hay when they're mowing."

"Do you have a theatre?"

"Go to the play!" cried Madame Grandet, "to see actors! Why, monsieur, don't you know that's a deadly sin?"

"Here, my dear monsieur," said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, "we'll give you your chickens in the shell."

"Oho! fresh eggs," said Charles, who, like all people accustomed to luxurious living, had already forgotten his partridge. "Why, this is delicious. You haven't a little butter, have you, my dear child?"

"Ah! butter! Then you don't want your cake, eh?" said the servant.

"Give him some butter, Nanon!" cried Eugénie.

The girl watched her cousin as he cut his bread into bits, and she took as much pleasure in the sight as the most emotional grisette in Paris takes in watching a melodrama in which innocence triumphs. To be sure Charles, having been brought up by a charming mother and rounded off by a woman of fashion, was as dainty and delicate and coquettish in his movements as any fine lady. The sympathy and affectionate admiration of a young woman possess a genuine magnetic influence. And so Charles, finding himself the object of his aunt's and cousin's unremitting attentions, could not escape the influence of the sentiments that inundated him, so to speak. He bestowed upon Eugénie a glance beaming with kindly regard and affection, a glance that seemed to smile. As he looked intently at her, he noticed the exquisite harmony of the features of that pure face, her innocent attitude, the magic brightness of her eyes, in which young thoughts of love were gleaming, and desire that knew nothing of lust.

"'Pon honor, my dear cousin, if you were in a box at the Opéra in full dress, I promise you that my aunt would prove to be right, and that you would cause much sinning in the way of envy among the men and jealousy among the women."

This compliment went straight to Eugénie's heart and made it throb with delight, although she did not understand it.

"Oh! cousin, you are making sport of a poor little country girl."

"If you knew me, cousin, you would know that I detest raillery; it sears the heart, wounds all the nobler sentiments—"

And he gracefully swallowed a bit of bread and butter.

"No, I probably haven't wit enough to make sport of other people, and that defect is a serious disadvantage to me. In Paris, they have a way of ruining a man by saying: 'He has a kind heart.' That phrase means: 'The poor boy's as stupid as a rhinoceros.' But as I am rich and known to be able to hit the bull's eye with the first shot, at thirty paces, with any sort of pistol, and in the open air, raillery treats me with respect."

"What you say, my nephew, betrays a good heart."

"You have a very pretty ring," said Eugénie; "is it wrong to ask you to let me look at it?"

Charles took off the ring and handed it to Eugénie, who blushed as she touched her cousin's pink nails with the ends of her fingers.

"See what a beautiful piece of work, mother."

"Oh! there's gold by the wholesale," said Nanon, appearing with the coffee.

"What's that?" Charles asked with a laugh, as he pointed to an oblong vessel of varnished brown earthenware, lined with porcelain and bordered with a fringe of ashes, in which the coffee fell to the bottom and returned to the surface of the boiling liquid.

"That is *biled* coffee," said Nanon.

"Ah! dear aunt, I will leave behind me at least one useful trace of my visit. You are far behind the times! I'll show you how to make good coffee in a coffee-pot *à la Chaptal.*"

He tried to explain the system of the coffee pot *à la Chaptal.*

"Pshaw! if there's as much fuss about it as that," said Nanon, "you might as well spend your life on it. I'll never make coffee like that. That's very fine! Who'll feed the cow, I wonder, while I'm making the coffee?"

"I will," said Eugénie.

"Child!" said Madame Grandet, glancing at her daughter.

At that word, which reminded them of the blow that was about to fall upon the unfortunate youth, the three women held their peace and gazed at him with an air of commiseration that attracted his notice.

"What's the matter, cousin?"

"Hush!" said Madame Grandet to Eugénie, who was about to reply. "You know, my child, that your father has undertaken to speak to monsieur—"

"Say Charles," said young Grandet.

"Ah! is your name Charles? That's a lovely name," cried Eugénie.

The disasters that are foreseen almost always occur. At this juncture, Nanon, Madame Grandet and Eugenie, who could not think without a shudder of the old cooper's return, heard the knocker ring with a note that was well known to them.

"There's papa!" said Eugénie.

She removed the saucer of sugar, leaving a few pieces on the cloth. Nanon took away the egg plate. Madame Grandet straightened up like a frightened deer. It was a genuine panic, which amazed Charles, who was unable to understand it.

"Well, what's the matter with you all?" he asked.

"Why, there's father," said Eugénie.

"Well—?"

Monsieur Grandet entered the room, darted a piercing glance at the table, at Charles, and understood everything.

"Aha! so you've been feasting your nephew, eh? good, very good, very, very good!" said he, without stuttering. "When the cat's running around on the roofs, the mice dance in the ceilings."

"Feasting?" said Charles to himself, quite incapable of suspecting the customs and usual diet of that household.

"Give me my glass, Nanon," said the good man.

Eugénie brought the glass. Grandet produced from his pocket a horn-handled knife with a stout blade, cut a slice of bread, took a little butter, spread it very carefully, and began to eat standing. At that moment, Charles was putting sugar in his coffee. Père Grandet noticed the lumps of sugar on the cloth and glared at his wife, who turned pale and recoiled a few steps; he leaned over and whispered in the poor old woman's ear:

"Where did you get all that sugar?"

"Nanon went to Fessard's for it; we didn't have any."

It is impossible to imagine the profound interest this scene had for the three women: Nanon had left her kitchen and was looking into the *salle* to see how affairs were progressing. Charles, having tasted his coffee, found it not sweet enough and looked for the sugar which Grandet had already secured.

"What do you want, nephew?" said the goodman.

"The sugar."

"Put in some milk," rejoined the master of the house, "it will tone down your coffee."

Eugénie took the saucer of sugar and placed it on the table, looking her father calmly in the eye. Certain it is that the fair Parisian, who holds a silk ladder in her feeble hands to facilitate her lover's flight, displays no more courage than Eugénie displayed in putting the sugar back upon the table. The lover will reward his mistress when she proudly exhibits a lovely bruised arm, each swollen vein of which will be bathed with tears and kisses and cured by love; while Charles was not likely ever to be admitted to the secret of the profound agitation that tore his cousin's heart under the old cooper's withering glance.

"You aren't eating, wife."

The poor serf came forward with a pitiful air, cut a small piece of bread and took a pear. Eugénie audaciously offered her father some grapes.

"Pray taste my preserve, papa!" she said.—"You'll eat some, cousin, won't you? I went and got these nice bunches on purpose for you."

"Oh! if nobody stops them, they'll pillage all Saumur for you, nephew. When you have finished, we will take a turn in the garden together; I have things to tell you that are not sugared."

Eugénie and her mother glanced at Charles with an expression that the young man could not mistake.

"What do those words mean, uncle? Since my poor mother's death"—at those words his voice became soft—"there is no misfortune that can possibly have any effect upon me—"

"Who can tell by what afflictions God may choose to test us, nephew?" said his aunt.

"Ta ta ta ta!" said Grandet, "now the nonsense is beginning. It pains me to see your pretty hands so white, nephew."

He showed him the shoulders of mutton that Providence had placed at the ends of his arms.

"There's a pair of hands made to pick up crowns! You have been brought up to clothe your feet in the skin of which the wallets are made that we keep banknotes in. A bad business! a bad business!"

"What do you mean, uncle? May I be hanged if I understand a single word."

"Come," said Grandet.

The miser closed the blade in his knife with a snap, drank the rest of his wine and opened the door.

"Courage, cousin!"

The girl's tone froze Charles's blood, and he followed his terrible kinsman in deadly anxiety. Eugénie, her mother and Nanon went into the kitchen, irresistibly impelled by curiosity to watch the two actors in the scene about to be enacted in the damp little garden, where the uncle and the nephew paced back and forth at first without speaking.

Grandet was not at all embarrassed by the necessity of telling Charles of his father's death, but he felt a sort of compassion for him, knowing that he was without a sou, and he was trying to find words to soften the cruel truth. "You have lost your father!"—that was nothing to say. Fathers die before their children. But: "You haven't a sou in the world!"—all earthly misfortunes were combined in those words. And the goodman for the third time started down the centre path, the gravel crackling under his feet. In the great crises of life, our minds cling tenaciously to the places where joy or sorrow bursts upon us. So Charles scrutinized with especial care the rows of box in the little garden, the withered leaves that fell from the trees, the dilapidated wall, the peculiar shapes of the fruit trees—picturesque details that would remain engraved in his memory, mingled forever with the thought of that supreme moment of his life, by virtue of a mnemonic development peculiar to the passions.

"It's very warm and fine," said Grandet, filling his lungs with fresh air.

"Yes, uncle—But why—?"

"Well, my boy," the uncle replied, "I have some bad news for you. Your father is very ill—"

"Why am I here?—Nanon, post-horses!" he cried. "I can find a carriage somewhere here," he added, turning to his uncle who was perfectly unmoved.

"Horses and carriage are of no use," he replied, looking earnestly at Charles, who said no more, and whose eyes became fixed—"Yes, my poor boy, you guess aright. He is dead. But that is nothing; there is something more serious. He blew out his brains."

"My father—?"

"Yes. But that is nothing. The papers talk about that, as if they knew all about it. Here, read this."

Grandet had borrowed Cruchot's paper and placed the fatal article before Charles's eyes. At that moment the poor youth, who was still a child, still at an age when the emotions betray themselves ingenuously, burst into tears.

"That's good," said Grandet to himself. "His eyes frightened me. He weeps, that's his salvation. —That too is nothing, my poor nephew," he added aloud, uncertain whether Charles was listening to him; "that is nothing, you will get over your grief; but—"

"Never! never! Father! father!"

"He has ruined you; you are penniless."

"What do I care for that? Where is my father? —father!"

The tears and sobs rang out in horrible fashion between the high walls, and were taken up and repeated by the echoes. The three women, overflowing with compassion, wept bitterly; tears are as contagious as laughter can be. Charles, without listening to his uncle, rushed through the courtyard into the house, found the stairway, went up to his room and threw himself across his bed with his face in the sheets, so that he might weep at his ease, away from his kinsfolk.

"We must let the first shower pass," said Grandet, returning to the living-room, where Eugénie and her mother had hastily resumed their seats, and were working with trembling hands, having wiped their eyes. "But that boy is good for nothing; he thinks more about the dead than he does about money."

Eugénie shuddered when her father expressed himself thus concerning the most sacred of sorrows. With that moment she began to judge her father.

Charles's sobs, although deadened, could be heard throughout that resonant house; and his bitter lament, which seemed to come from somewhere underground, did not cease until toward evening, after gradually growing weaker and weaker.

"Poor boy!" said Madame Grandet.

Fatal exclamation! Père Grandet looked at his wife, at Eugénie, at the sugar-bowl; he remembered the elaborate breakfast prepared for his unhappy kinsman, and he took up his position in the centre of the room.

"By the way," he said with his customary calm manner, "I trust that you do not propose to continue your prodigality, Madame Grandet. I don't give you MY money to stuff that young rascal with sugar."

"Mother had nothing to do with it," said Eugénie. "I was the one who—"

"Is it because you're of age," retorted Grandet, interrupting her, "that you choose to disobey me? Consider, Eugénie—"

"Father, your brother's son, when he's in your house, ought not to go without—"

"Ta ta ta ta!" said the cooper in four different keys, "my brother's son here, my nephew there! Charles is nothing to us; he hasn't a sou to his name; his father has failed; and when this young exquisite has wept his fill, he'll take himself away from here; I don't propose to have him turn my house upside down."

"What is failing, father?" Eugénie asked.

"To fail," her father replied, "is to commit the most dishonorable of all the acts that can bring dishonor to a man."

"It must be a very grievous sin," said Madame Grandet, "and our brother will be damned."

"There you are at your litanies," he retorted with a shrug.—"Failure, Eugénie, is a theft that the law unfortunately takes under its protection. People entrusted their vintages to Guillaume Grandet on the strength of his reputation for probity and honorable dealing; then he took them

all, leaving them only their eyes to weep with. The highway robber is preferable to the bankrupt; he attacks you openly and you can defend yourself; he risks his own life; but the other—At all events, Charles is dishonored."

The words echoed in the poor girl's heart and oppressed it with their full weight. As straightforward as a flower born in the depths of a forest is delicate, she knew nothing of the maxims of society, or its deceitful reasoning, or its sophistries; she accepted therefore the cruel explanation of bankruptcy that her father designedly gave her, without a word as to the distinction that exists between an involuntary and a premeditated failure.

"But, father, couldn't you have prevented this disaster?"

"My brother didn't consult me; besides, he owes four millions."

"Pray, what is a million, father?" she asked, with the artlessness of a child who thinks he can obtain instantly what he desires.

"A million?" said Grandet. "Why, it's a million twenty-sou pieces, and it takes five twenty-sou pieces to make five francs."

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" cried Eugénie, "how could my uncle have had four millions? Can there be any other person in France who has as many millions as that?"

Père Grandet rubbed his chin and smiled, and the wen upon his nose seemed to expand.

"What will become of cousin Charles?"

"He's going to the Indies, where he will try to make his fortune as his father wished."

"But has he any money to get there?"

"I will pay for his journey—as far as—yes, as far as Nantes."

Eugénie threw her arms about her father's neck.

"Oh! father, how good you are!"

She hugged him until she made him almost ashamed and his conscience troubled him a little.

"Does it take much time to save a million?" she asked.

"Egad," said the cooper, "you know what a napoleon is; well it takes fifty thousand of them to make a million."

"Mamma, we will have neuvaines said for him."

"I was thinking of that," the mother replied.

"That's it! always spending money," cried the father. "I say, do you think there are hundreds and thousands here?"

At that moment a hollow groan, more lugubrious than all that had gone before, woke the echoes of the attic and froze Eugénie and her mother with terror.

"Nanon, go and see if he's killing himself," said Grandet.—"Look you," he continued, turning to his wife and daughter, who had turned pale at his words, "no nonsense, you two. I am going to leave you. I am going out to take a look at our Dutchmen who are to leave to-day. Then I shall go to see Cruchot and talk this business over with him."

He left the room. When the door had closed

behind him, Eugénie and her mother breathed more freely. Until that morning the daughter had never had a feeling of constraint in her father's presence; but during the last few hours her sentiments and her ideas had changed from moment to moment.

"Mamma, how many louis do you get for a cask of wine?"

"Your father sells his for a hundred to a hundred and fifty, sometimes two hundred francs, according to what I have heard."

"And if the harvest gives him fourteen hundred casks?"

"Really, child, I don't know anything about it; your father never talks to me about his business."

"But papa must be rich."

"Perhaps. But Monsieur Cruchot told me that he bought Froidfond two years ago. That must have embarrassed him."

Eugénie, having no further information as to her father's fortune, remained at that point in her calculations.

"He didn't even so much as see me, the darling!" said Nanon, returning from upstairs. "He's stretched out on his bed like a calf and crying like a Madeleine, and that's a real blessing! What's the matter with the poor dear young man?"

"Come quickly, mamma, let us go up and comfort him; and if anybody knocks we can come down."

Madame Grandet was defenceless against her daughter's beseeching tone. Eugénie was sublime, she was all woman. They went up together with

palpitating hearts, to Charles's room. The door was open. The young man neither saw nor heard anything. Drowned in tears, he was uttering inarticulate groans.

"How he loves his father!" said Eugénie in an undertone.

It was impossible not to recognize in her tone the hopes of a heart that was unwittingly aflame with passion. Madame Grandet glanced at her daughter with eyes brimming over with maternal affection and whispered in her ear:

"Take care, you might fall in love with him."

"Fall in love with him!" Eugénie repeated. "Ah! if you knew what father said!"

Charles turned over and saw his aunt and cousin.

"I have lost my father, my poor father! If he had confided the secret of his misfortunes to me, we would have worked together to repair them. My God! my dear father! I was so sure of seeing him again that I think I kissed him coldly—"

Sobs choked his voice.

"We will pray for him," said Madame Grandet. "Resign yourself to God's will."

"Have courage, cousin," said Eugénie! "Your loss is irreparable, so think now about saving your honor!"

With the keen instinct, the innate delicacy of woman, who displays tact in everything, even when she offers consolation, Eugénie sought to divert her cousin's mind from his grief by forcing him to think of himself.

"My honor?" he cried, pushing back his hair with an abrupt movement.

He sat up on his bed and folded his arms.

"Ah! to be sure. My father has failed, so my uncle said."

He uttered a heartrending cry and hid his face in his hands.

"Leave me, cousin, leave me! My God! my God! forgive my father, for he must have suffered torments."

There was a sort of ghastly attractiveness in the sight of this sincere youthful grief, unstudied and unaffected. It was an essentially modest sorrow, as Eugénie and her mother, in the simplicity of their hearts, understood when Charles made a gesture requesting them to leave him to himself. They went downstairs, silently resumed their places by the window, and worked for about an hour without speaking. Eugénie had noticed, in the stealthy glance she cast about the young man's room—the glance of a young girl who sees everything in a twinkling—the pretty trifles in his toilet-case, his scissors and his razors with gold-mounted handles. This glimpse of luxury seen through the mist of grief made Charles still more interesting to her, by contrast perhaps. Never had so grave an event, so dramatic a spectacle, been presented to the imagination of these two creatures whose lives were passed in tranquillity and solitude.

"Mamma," said Eugénie, "we will wear mourning for my uncle."

"Your father will decide about that," Madame Grandet replied.

Again silence fell upon them. Eugénie drew her needles in and out with a clock-like regularity that would have betrayed to an observer the thoughts with which her meditation teemed. The adorable child's first wish was to share her cousin's mourning.

*

About four o'clock a sharp knock at the door echoed in Madame Grandet's heart.

"What can be the matter with your father?" she said to her daughter.

The vinedresser entered the room in high good-humor. Having taken off his gloves, he rubbed his hands hard enough to rub the skin off, had it not been tanned like Russia leather, minus the odor of larch-gum and incense. He strode back and forth and looked at the clock. At last his secret escaped him.

"Wife," he said, without stammering, "I have caught them all. Our wine is sold! The Dutch and Belgians went away this morning; I walked about on the square in front of their hôtel, looking as much like a fool as possible. A fellow, whom you know, came up to me. The owners of all the good vineyards are holding on to their crops and prefer to wait; I didn't say a word to prevent them. Our Belgian was in despair. I noticed that. I struck a bargain with him, he takes our product at two hundred francs the cask, half in ready cash. I have got my pay in gold. The notes are signed and here are six louis for you. In three months the price of wine will fall."

These last words were uttered calmly, but in such a profoundly ironical tone, that the good people of

Saumur, who were standing in groups on the square, struck dumb by the news of the sale Grandet had made, would have shuddered had they heard them. A panic would have ensued that would have lowered the price of wine fifty per cent.

"You have a thousand casks this year, father?" said Eugénie.

"Yes, *fifille.*"

That word was the superlative expression of the old cooper's satisfaction.

"That makes two hundred thousand twenty-sou pieces?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"Then, father, you can easily help Charles."

The amazement, the indignation, the stupefaction of Belshazzar, when he saw the *Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin,* written on the wall, are not to be compared with the icy wrath of Grandet, who, having utterly forgotten his nephew, found him quartered in his daughter's heart and thoughts.

"Damnation! since that fop put his foot in *my* house, everything is turned topsy-turvy. You give yourself airs buying sweetmeats and setting out wedding feasts. I won't have any more of it. I am old enough to know how to behave, I fancy! At all events, I don't propose to take lessons from my daughter or anybody else. I will do for my nephew what it is fitting I should do, and you needn't poke your nose into it. Look you, Eugénie," he added, turning upon her, "don't say another word, or I'll send you to the Abbaye of Noyers with Nanon,

don't make a mistake; and not later than to-morrow, if you aren't careful. Where is the boy? has he come down?"

"No, my dear," Madame Grandet replied.

"What, then, is he doing?"

"He's weeping for his father," said Eugénie.

Grandet looked at his daughter, but had not a word to say. There was a little of the father about him, after all. After one or two turns up and down the room, he went up to his cabinet to meditate upon an investment in the public funds. The wood he had cut on his two thousand acres of woodland had brought him six hundred thousand francs; by adding to that sum the money for his poplars, his income for the last and the current year, in addition to the two hundred thousand francs from the bargain he had just concluded, he had on hand nine hundred thousand francs. The twenty per cent to be made in a short time by buying consols, which were quoted at seventy francs, tempted him. He figured out the probable profits of his speculation on the newspaper in which his brother's death was announced, hearing, but not heeding, his nephew's groans. Nanon came and knocked on the wall to tell her master to come down, as dinner was served. In the passage, with his foot on the last stair, Grandet said to himself:

"As I shall draw interest at eight per cent, I'll do that. In two years I shall have fifteen hundred thousand francs, which I will withdraw from Paris in honest gold.—Well, where's my nephew?"

"He says he doesn't want anything to eat," Nanon replied. "That ain't healthy."

"So much saved," her master retorted.

"Gracious! I should say so!" said she.

"Bah! he won't weep forever. Hunger drives the wolf out of the wood."

The dinner was a strangely silent affair.

"My dear," said Madame Grandet when the cloth was removed, "we must wear mourning."

"Upon my word, Madame Grandet, you seem hard pressed to invent ways of spending money. Mourning is in the heart, not the clothes."

"But mourning for a brother is indispensable, and the Church orders us to—"

"Buy your mourning out of your six louis. You can give me a piece of crêpe, that will do for me."

Eugénie glanced heavenward without speaking. For the first time in her life her dormant, repressed, but suddenly awakened generous impulses were wounded at every turn. That evening was, as far as appearances went, like a thousand other evenings in their monotonous existence, but it was certainly the most horrible. Eugénie worked without raising her head, and did not use the workbox Charles had looked scornfully upon on the previous evening. Madame Grandet knitted her sleeves. Grandet twirled his thumbs for four hours, absorbed in mental calculations, whose results were destined to astonish Saumur on the following day. No one called upon the family. At that moment the whole town was ringing with Grandet's exploit, with his

brother's failure and the arrival of his nephew. In obedience to the necessity of talking over their common interests, all the owners of vineyards among the upper and middle classes of Saumur were at Monsieur des Grassins', where the air was reeking with terrible imprecations against the ex-mayor.

Nanon was spinning and the noise made by her spinning-wheel was the only sound that was heard beneath the dingy ceiling of the living-room.

"We aren't wearing out our tongues," said she, showing her teeth, which were as large and white as peeled almonds.

"We mustn't wear out anything," rejoined Grandet, emerging from his reverie.

He had before his eyes the prospect of eight millions in three years, and he was sailing upon that endless sea of gold.

"Let's go to bed. I will say good-night to my nephew for everybody, and see if he won't eat a little something."

Madame Grandet remained on the first-floor landing to listen to the conversation that was about to take place between Charles and his uncle. Eugénie, bolder than she, went up two steps.

"Well, nephew, you are deeply grieved? Yes, weep away, it's natural. A father's a father. But we must bear our trials patiently. I am making plans for you while you're weeping. I am a kind uncle, you see. Come, courage. Will you have a small glass of wine? Wine costs nothing at Saumur; people offer wine here as they offer a cup

of tea in India.—But you have no light," he continued. "Bad! bad! we must be able to see what we're doing."

He walked to the mantelpiece.

"Hallo!" he cried, "a wax candle! Where the devil did they fish up a wax candle? The hussies would tear up the floor of my house to cook eggs for that fellow."

When they heard this, the mother and the daughter rushed into their rooms and buried themselves under the bedclothes with the celerity of frightened mice running back into their holes.

"So you have a hidden treasure, Madame Grandet, have you?" said Grandet, entering his wife's room.

"I am praying, my dear; wait," said the poor woman in a trembling voice.

"The devil fly away with your good Lord!" grumbled Grandet.

Misers do not believe in a life to come; the present is everything to them. This reflection sheds a ghastly light upon the present epoch, when, more than at any other time, money controls law, politics and morals. Institutions, books, men and doctrines, all things conspire to undermine the belief in a future life upon which the social structure has been maintained for eighteen hundred years. In our day, the coffin is a transition little dreaded. The future that formerly awaited us beyond the *Requiem* has been transported into the present. To attain *per fas et nefas* the terrestrial paradise of luxurious living and gratified vanity, to turn one's heart to

stone and macerate one's body in order to obtain ephemeral wealth, as men in the old days suffered martyrdom in order to obtain everlasting happiness, is the universal thought! a thought written everywhere, even in the laws, which ask the legislator "What will you pay?" instead of asking him: "What do you think?" When this doctrine has descended from the bourgeoisie to the common people, what will become of the country?

"Have you finished, Madame Grandet?" demanded the old cooper.

"I am praying for you, my dear."

"Very well! good-night. We'll have a talk to-morrow morning."

The poor woman slept like the scholar who has not learned his lessons and fears to find his teacher's angry face glaring at him when he awakes. As she was rolling herself up in the bedclothes, in sheer terror, so that she might hear nothing, Eugénie crept to her side, in her chemise, with bare feet, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Dear mother," she said, "to-morrow I'll tell him it was I."

"No, he would send you to Noyers. Let me take the blame, he won't eat me."

"Do you hear, mamma?"

"What?"

"Why, *he* is still weeping."

"Do go to bed, my child. You will take cold in your feet; the floor is damp."

Thus passed the solemn day that was to exert a

great influence upon the whole life of the rich and poor heiress, whose sleep was not so sound or so pure as it had been hitherto. Not infrequently certain phases of human life seem improbable from a literary point of view, although they are true. But would not one almost always omit to cast a sort of psychological light upon our spontaneous determinations, by omitting to explain the reasoning, mysteriously thought out, that necessitates them? Perhaps Eugénie's passion should be analyzed to its most minute fibres; for it became, some wits would say, a disease, and influenced her whole existence. Many people prefer to deny conclusions rather than to measure the force of the liens, the knots, the bonds that weld one fact to another in the moral order. In this connection, therefore, Eugénie's past will serve as a guaranty to keen observers of human nature of the sincerity of her thoughtlessness, and the spontaneity of the effusions of her heart. The more tranquil her life had been, the more readily did womanly compassion, the most ingenious of sentiments, unfold in her heart. And so, disturbed by the events of the day, she awoke several times to listen to her cousin, thinking that she still heard the sighs that had echoed in her heart since the day before; sometimes she seemed to see him dying of grief, sometimes she dreamed that he was starving. Toward morning she was certain that she heard an alarming outcry. She at once dressed—it was just daybreak—and ran noiselessly to her cousin, who had left his door open. The

candle had burned down into the socket. Charles, overcome by nature, was sleeping in his armchair, fully dressed, with his head resting on the bed; he was dreaming as people dream whose stomachs are empty.

Eugénie could weep at her ease; she could admire the handsome youthful face, paled by suffering, the eyes, swollen with weeping, that seemed still to weep, although asleep. Charles sympathetically divined Eugénie's presence; he opened his eyes and saw her beside him, deeply moved.

"Forgive me, cousin," he said, evidently with no comprehension of time or place.

"There are hearts here that hear you, cousin, and *we* thought that you needed something. You must go to bed, you will wear yourself out if you remain like this."

"True."

"Well, good-night."

She ran away, ashamed and yet happy that she had gone to him. Innocence alone ventures upon such bold steps. Once endowed with knowledge, virtue schemes as cleverly as vice. Eugénie, who did not tremble in her cousin's presence, could hardly stand upon her legs when she reached her own room. Her life of ignorance had suddenly ceased; she argued with herself, and reproached herself again and again. "What sort of opinion will he have of me? He will think that I love him." That was exactly what she was most desirous that he should think. Honest love has a

prescience of its own and knows that love begets love. What an event for that lonely girl to have entered a young man's room by stealth! Are there not thoughts and deeds, which, in love, are equivalent in certain hearts to a solemn betrothal? An hour later she entered her mother's room and helped her to dress as usual. Then they took their usual seats at the window and awaited Grandet's coming with that anxiety that freezes the heart or warms it, oppresses or dilates it, according to the temperament of the person concerned, when a stormy scene or a punishment is anticipated; a feeling so natural that domestic animals experience it, and whine and cry for the slight pain caused by a whipping, although they do not whimper when they wound themselves inadvertently.

The master of the house came down in due time, but he spoke to his wife with an absent-minded air, kissed Eugénie, and took his place at table, apparently without thinking of his threats of the night before.

"What has become of my nephew? The boy isn't much in the way."

"He's asleep, monsieur," said Nanon.

"So much the better, he doesn't need any wax candle," said Grandet in a bantering tone.

This unaccustomed clemency, this bitter gayety, impressed Madame Grandet, who watched her husband very attentively. The goodman—This perhaps is a convenient place to remark that, in Touraine, Anjou, Poitou and Bretagne, the title *goodman*—

bonhomme—frequently used heretofore in reference to Grandet, is bestowed upon the most cruel and the most kindly men alike, as soon as they have reached middle age. The designation predicates nothing as to the disposition of the individual,—The goodman took his hat and gloves, and said:

"I am going to loiter around the square to meet our Cruchots if possible."

"Eugénie, your father certainly has something on his mind."

Grandet was a light sleeper and spent half of his nights in the preliminary scheming which imparted to his views, his observations, his plans, their astonishing accuracy, and assured them that unfailing success at which the Saumurites marveled. All human power is a compound of patience and time. Powerful men will and watch. The miser's life is a constant exertion of human power in the service of individuality. It rests upon two sentiments only: self-love and self-interest; but self-interest being in some sense a compact and well developed self-love, the constant demonstration of real superiority, self-love and self-interest are two parts of the same whole: selfishness. To this fact is due, perhaps, the extraordinary interest misers arouse when skilfully brought upon the stage. Everyone has some slight fellow-feeling with these men who attack all the human emotions even as they are the embodiment of them all. Where is the man without some longing, and what social longing can be gratified without money?

Grandet had something on his mind in very truth, as his wife said. Like all misers, he felt a constant need of playing a game with other men, of winning from them all alike. To impose upon another is a demonstration of power, is it not, and gives one the right to despise, forever after, those who are so weak as to allow themselves to be devoured here on earth? Oh! who has truly understood the allegory of the lamb lying peacefully at God's feet, the most touching symbol of all earthly victims, of their future—in a word, weakness and suffering glorified? The miser allows the lamb to fatten, puts him in a pen, kills him, cooks him, eats him and despises him. The miser's pasturage consists of money and contempt.

During the night the goodman's ideas had taken a different course: hence his mildness. He had concocted a scheme to make fools of the Parisians, to twist and roll and mould them, to make them go and come and perspire and hope and turn pale; to amuse himself with their antics—he, the ex-cooper, sitting in his dingy living-room or climbing the worm-eaten stairway of his house in Saumur. He had been thinking of his nephew. He proposed to save his dead brother's honor without the cost of a sou to his nephew or himself. His funds were to be invested for three years, so that he had nothing to do but to look after his property; he needed an outlet for his mischievous activity and he found it in his brother's failure. Feeling nothing between his paws to squeeze, he determined to trample on the

Parisians for Charles's benefit, and to show himself an excellent brother at a trifling cost. The honor of the family counted for so little in his plan, that his good will might be compared to the interest that gamblers take in seeing a game well played in which they have nothing at stake. The Cruchots were necessary to him and he did not choose to go and seek them, so he had determined to lure them to his house and to begin there that very evening, the comedy of which he had the plot in his mind, in order that he might be the object of general admiration on the morrow, without the expenditure of a sou.

In her father's absence, Eugénie had the happiness of being able to minister openly to her beloved cousin, to pour out upon him, without fear, the treasures of her pity,—one of woman's sublime superiorities, the only one that she seeks to establish, the only one that she forgives man for allowing her to assert. Three or four times Eugénie went and listened at her cousin's door, to know if he were asleep or awake; then, when he rose, the cream, the coffee, the eggs, the fruit, the plates, the glass, everything connected with the breakfast came in for a share of her attention. She ran hastily up the rickety stairs to listen to the sounds he was making. Was he dressing? was he weeping again? She went as far as the door.

"Cousin!"

"Cousin?"

"Will you breakfast downstairs or in your room?"

"Wherever you choose."

"How do you feel?"

"My dear cousin, I am ashamed to say I am hungry."

This conversation through the door was to Eugénie a most romantic episode.

"Well, we will bring your breakfast to your room so as not to annoy my father."

She flew down into the kitchen as lightly as a bird.

"Nanon, go and arrange his room."

The staircase, so often ascended and descended, which echoed every sound, seemed to Eugénie to have lost its antiquity; in her eyes it was aglow with light, it spoke, it was as young as she was, as her love to which it ministered. Her mother too, her kind, indulgent mother, consented to humor the caprices of her love, and when Charles's room was put to rights, they both went up to bear the unhappy youth company: does not Christian charity bid us to comfort the afflicted? The two women extracted from their religion a goodly number of little sophistries to justify their conduct to themselves. Charles Grandet found himself therefore the object of the most affectionate and delicate attentions. His grief-stricken heart felt keenly the soothing quality of the purring friendship, the exquisite sympathy which those two hearts, always restrained hitherto, were quick to display upon finding themselves free for a moment in the region of suffering, their natural sphere. Justified by the relationship, Eugénie set about arranging the linen

and the toilet articles her cousin had brought, and could marvel at her leisure over each luxurious trifle, the gewgaws of silver and wrought gold that fell under her hand, which she held for a long time under the pretence of examining them. Charles was deeply moved at the generous interest manifested by his aunt and his cousin; he knew Parisian society well enough to know that in his present predicament he would have found none but cold or indifferent hearts there. Eugénie appeared to him in all the splendor of her special beauty, and he admired thenceforth the innocent manners he had laughed at the day before. And so, when Eugénie took from Nanon's hands the china bowl full of coffee with cream, and served her cousin with the artlessness of true feeling, meeting his glance without embarrassment, the Parisian's eyes filled with tears, and he took her hand and kissed it.

"Well, what is the matter now?" she asked.

"Oh! these are tears of gratitude," was the reply.

Eugénie turned abruptly to the mantel and took down the candlesticks.

"Here, Nanon, take them away," she said.

When she looked at her cousin again she was still very red, but her eyes were able to lie, none the less, and not express the great joy that overflowed her heart; but their eyes expressed the same sentiment, as their minds met in the same thought: the future was theirs.

This soothing emotion was the more delicious to

Charles in the midst of his great sorrow, as it was entirely unexpected.

A knock at the door summoned the two women back to their places. Luckily, they were able to descend the stairs rapidly enough to be seated and at work when Grandet entered; if he had met them in the passage, nothing more would have been necessary to arouse his suspicions.

After breakfast, which the goodman ate standing, the keeper, who had not yet received the promised recompense, arrived from Froidfond with a hare and some partridges shot in the park, together with eels and two pike due from the millers.

"Well, well! poor Cornoiller comes like fresh fish in Lent.—Is this good to eat?"

"Yes, my dear generous monsieur, it was killed two days ago."

"Come, Nanon, stir your boots!" said the goodman. "Take that and cook it for dinner; I entertain two Cruchots."

Nanon opened her eyes in stupefaction and looked from one to another.

"Well, where am I to get lard and spices?" said she.

"Wife," said Grandet, "give Nanon six francs, and remind me to go to the cellar for some good wine."

"By the way, Monsieur Grandet," said the keeper, who had prepared a harangue in order to bring to a point the question of his salary, "Monsieur Grandet—"

"Ta ta ta ta!" said Grandet; "I know what you're going to say; you're a good fellow; we'll talk about that to-morrow, I am in too much of a hurry to-day.—Wife, give him a hundred sous," he said to Madame Grandet.

He left the room. The poor woman was only too happy to purchase peace for eleven francs. She knew that Grandet would hold his peace for a fortnight after he had taken back in this way, piece by piece, the money he had given her.

"Here, Cornoiller," said she, slipping ten francs into his hand; "some day we will acknowledge your services."

Cornoiller had nothing to say. He took his leave.

"Madame," said Nanon, who had donned her black cap and taken her basket, "I don't need but three francs, keep the rest. Take it, it will be all right."

"Have a good dinner, Nanon, my cousin will come down," said Eugénie.

"Certainly, something extraordinary is going on here," said Madame Grandet. "This is the third time your father has invited company to dinner since we have been married."

*

About four o'clock, just as Eugénie and her mother had finished laying the table for six people, and the master of the house had brought up several bottles of those exquisite wines which provincials preserve with veneration, Charles entered the living-room. He was very pale. His movements, his demeanor, his expression and the tone of his voice had a sadness that was full of charm. He was not playing at grief, he was suffering in sober earnest, and the veil spread over his features by his suffering gave him that interesting air that is so attractive to women. Eugénie loved him the more for it. Perhaps, too, misfortune had brought him nearer to her. Charles was no longer the wealthy youth revolving in a sphere she could not hope to approach, but a kinsman suddenly plunged into utter poverty. Poverty engenders equality. Woman has this in common with the angels, that suffering beings belong to her. Charles and Eugénie understood each other, and spoke to each other only with their eyes; for the poor fallen dandy, the orphan, took his seat in a corner, and remained there silent, calm and proud; but from time to time his cousin's gentle caressing glance beamed upon him, constraining him to lay aside his sad thoughts and to fly with her into the fields of hope and of the future, where she loved to wander with him.

At that moment, the town of Saumur was more excited over the dinner to be given by Grandet to the Cruchots than it had been the day before by the sale of his harvest, which constituted the crime of high treason against the vineyard. If the shrewd old vinedresser had given his dinner with the same purpose that cost Alcibiades' dog his tail, he would have been a great man perhaps; but, holding himself far above a town which he constantly tricked, he made little account of Saumur.

The Des Grassins soon learned of the violent death and probable bankruptcy of Charles's father; they at once determined to call upon their client that same evening, in order to share his sorrow and afford him proofs of their friendship, and at the same time to ascertain the motives that had led him to invite the Cruchots to dinner at such a time.

At five o'clock precisely, Président C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary made their appearance, arrayed to the teeth in their Sunday best. The guests took their places at table and began by dining unusually well. Grandet was grave, Charles silent, Eugénie dumb; Madame Grandet said no more than usual, so that the dinner was a veritable repast of condolence. When they rose from the table, Charles said to his uncle and aunt:

"Allow me to retire. I am obliged to write a number of painful letters."

"Certainly, nephew."

When the goodman felt certain that Charles was

out of hearing and was presumably absorbed in his writing, he glanced slyly at his wife.

"Madame Grandet, what we have to say would be Greek to you; it is half-past seven and you had better go and tuck yourself into bed.—Good-night, my daughter."

He kissed Eugénie, and the two women left the room. Thereupon began the scene in which, more than at any other time in his life, Père Grandet displayed the address he had acquired in dealing with his fellowmen, which often procured for him, on the part of those whose skin he bit a little too sharply, the sobriquet of *old dog*. If the ex-mayor of Saumur had had a loftier ambition, if circumstances had raised him to the higher social spheres and had sent him to the congresses in which international affairs are treated, and if he had there made use of the genius with which his zealous care of his personal interests had endowed him, there can be no doubt that his services would have been gloriously advantageous to France. However, it may be equally probable that, outside of Saumur, the goodman would have cut but a poor figure. Perhaps some minds are like animals that cease to bring forth when they are taken from the regions in which they were born.

"Mon-on-on-sieur le Pré-pré-président, you were sa-a-aying that the f-f-failure—"

The stuttering that the goodman had affected for so long and that was commonly supposed to be natural, as well as the deafness of which he

complained in rainy weather, became, at this juncture, so fatiguing to the two Cruchots that they made wry faces involuntarily, acting as if they were trying to finish the words in which he entangled himself at pleasure. At this point it is necessary, perhaps, to give the history of Grandet's stuttering and deafness. No one in all Anjou could hear or pronounce Angevin French more distinctly than the crafty vinedresser. Long ago, notwithstanding his shrewdness, he had been completely taken in by an Israelite, who, in the discussion, held his hand to his ear as a sort of trumpet, on the pretext that he could hear better thus, and sputtered so in trying to pronounce his words, that Grandet, falling a victim to his kindness of heart, felt obliged to suggest to the rascally Jew the words and ideas that the Jew seemed to be seeking, to finish out the said Jew's arguments himself, to say what the damned Jew should have said, in short, to be the Jew and not Grandet. The cooper emerged from that curious contest with the only bargain that he had ever, in the whole course of his business life, had reason to complain of. But although he lost, pecuniarily speaking, he gained a useful moral lesson, and later he reaped its benefits. So the goodman ended by blessing the Jew who had taught him the art of arousing his business adversary's impatience, and by keeping him busy expressing his, Grandet's, thought, causing him constantly to lose sight of his own. Now Grandet had never had a matter that required the skilful employment of

deafness, stammering and the incomprehensible obscurity in which he enveloped his ideas, more than the one now at issue. In the first place, he did not choose to assume the responsibility for his ideas; in the second place, he desired to retain control over his words and to leave his real intentions in doubt.

"Monsieur de Bon-Bon-Bonfons—"

For the second time in three years Grandet called Cruchot's nephew, Monsieur de Bonfons.

The president might well have believed that the artful old man had selected him for a son-in-law.

"You were s-s-sa-ay-ing that failures m-m-a-ay be pre-v-vented, in so-so-ome cases, by—"

"By the tribunals of commerce themselves. That happens every day," said Monsieur C. de Bonfons, bestriding Père Grandet's idea, or thinking that he guessed it and condescending to explain it to him. "Listen!"

"I am l-l-listening," replied the goodman humbly, assuming the mischievous expression of a child laughing internally at his teacher while apparently paying the most profound attention to him.

"When a man of means and highly esteemed, like monsieur your late brother in Paris, for instance,—"

"M-m-my brother, yes."

"Is threatened with insolvency—"

"Th-th-a-at is called ins-s-solvency, is it?"

"Yes. When his failure becomes imminent, the tribunal of commerce, which has jurisdiction of his case—follow me carefully—has the power, by a

decree, to name liquidators for his business. To go into liquidation is not to fail, you understand. By failing a man is dishonored; if he goes into liquidation he remains an honest man."

"That is m-m-much better, if it d-d-doesn't cost any m-m-ore," said Grandet.

"But a man may go into liquidation even without the intervention of the tribunal of commerce. For," said the president, taking a pinch of snuff, "how is a failure made known?"

"True, I n-n-never thought of th-th-that," said Grandet.

"In the first place," continued the magistrate, "by filing his schedule with the clerk of the tribunal, which the debtor does in person or by his attorney duly authorized. Secondly, by the request of the creditors. Now, if the debtor does not file his schedule, if no creditor seeks a judgment declaring the aforesaid debtor insolvent, what happens?"

"Yes, l-l-let us see."

"Then the family of the deceased, his personal representatives, his heirs, or the debtor himself, if he is not dead, or his friends, if he be in hiding, attend to the liquidation. Perhaps you propose to liquidate your brother's affairs?" the president asked.

"Ah! Grandet," cried the notary, "that would be a fine thing to do. There are men of honor in the provinces. If you should rescue your name, for it is your name, you would be a—"

"Sublime man!" said the president, interrupting his uncle.

"Ce-e-ertainly," rejoined the old vinedresser; "my b-b-brother's na-a-ame is Grandet like mi-mi-mine. That is sure and ce-ertain. I do-o-o-n't say n-n-no. And this l-l-liqui-d-dation may in any event be v-v-very advant-t-tageous for my n-n-nephew, whom I am v-v-very fo-o-ond of. But the af-f-fair must be l-l-looked into. I don't kn-kn-o-ow the t-t-tricks of Paris. I am a Saumurite, you see. My v-v-vines, my d-d-ditches, in short, I h-h-have my own b-b-business to attend to. I n-n-never ma-a-ade a n-n-note. What is a n-n-note? I have re-re-ceived many, b-b-but never s-s-signed one. You t-t-take them and d-d-d-iscount th-th-them. That's all I kn-kn-know. I have heard that you c-c-could buy n-n-no—"

"Yes," said the president. "You can buy notes on the street at a percentage of their face value. Do you understand?"

Grandet made a trumpet of his hand and put it to his ear, and the president repeated his sentence.

"Why, in th-th-that case there's f-f-food and d-d-drink in it, eh! I kn-kn-know nothing at my a-a-age ab-b-bout all th-th-those things. I m-m-must stay here to l-l-look after the f-f-fruit. The f-f-fruit p-p-piles up and the f-f-fruit is what we p-p-pay with. F-f-first of all, we m-m-must look after the c-c-crops. I have m-m-more impo-o-ortant interests at Froidfond. I c-c-can't leave my house,

m-m-mix myself up in a d-d-devilish mess . d-d-don't know anything about. You s-s-say I ought to l-l-liquidate, to s-s-stop the d-d-declaration of ins-s-s-solvency, to b-b-be at Paris. A man c-c-can't be in t-t-two places at once, unless he's a l-l-little b-b-bird, and—"

"I understand you," cried the notary. "Well, my old friend, you have friends, old friends, ready to devote themselves to you."

"Good!" thought the vinedresser, "make up your mind to it!"

"And if someone should go to Paris, look up your brother Guillaume's largest creditor and say—"

"One m-m-moment, right th-th-there," rejoined the goodman; "s-s-say what? So-o-omething l-l-like thi-this: 'Mon-Mon-sieur G-G-Grandet of Saumur here, Mon-Mon-sieur Grandet of S-S-Saumur there. He l-l-loves his b-b-bro-o-ther, he loves his n-n-nephew. Grandet is a k-k-kind-hearted relation and his int-t-entions are g-g-good. He has s-s-sold his v-v-intage well. Don't d-d-declare ins-s-ol-vency, come tog-g-ether, appoint li-li-iquidators. Then, G-G-Grandet will see. You will g-g-et more out of it by l-l-liquidating than b-b-by letting the l-l-lawyers get their n-n-nose in it.' Isn't that about the thing?"

"Precisely," said the president.

"Because, you see, Monsieur de Bon-Bon-Bonfons, I must l-l-look into the affair b-b-before deci-i-ding. If you c-c-can't do a th-th-thing, you c-c-an't. In every imp-p-portant affair, you must

kn-kn-know what you've g-g-got and what it's going to c-c-c-cost, if you don't want to r-r-ruin yourself. Isn't that s-s-so?"

"Certainly," said the president. "It is my opinion that, in a few months' time we can buy off the creditors for a certain sum and take receipts in full by agreement. Ah! you can entice a dog a long way with a bit of lard. When there's been no decree of insolvency and you hold all the claims, you become as white as snow."

"As s-s-snow," Grandet repeated, again making a trumpet of his hand. "I d-d-don't understand about the s-s-snow."

"Pray listen to what I am saying!" cried the president.

"I am l-l-listening."

"Notes are merchandise that may rise and fall in value. That is a deduction from the theory of Jeremy Bentham concerning money-lending. That publicist proved that the prejudice against money-lenders was absurd."

"Ah!" said the goodman.

"Considering that money is a commodity, in principle, according to Bentham, and that the things that represent money become commodities in like manner," continued the president; "considering that it is a well-known fact that, being subject to the usual variations that govern in business matters, the commercial note, bearing this or that signature, is, like such and such an article, plentiful or scarce on the street, is held at a high figure or falls to

nothing, the court orders—bless my soul! what an idiot, I am! I beg your pardon—I am of opinion that you can save your brother's name for twenty-five per cent."

"You c-c-call him J-J-Jeremy B-B-Ben—"

"Jeremy Bentham, an Englishman."

"He's a Jeremy that enables us to avoid many lamentations in business matters," said the notary, laughingly.

"Those Englishmen have c-c-common sense s-s-sometimes," said Grandet. "S-s-so, according to B-B-Bentham, if my b-b-brother's notes are not w-w-worth anything—If I am r-r-right, eh? It s-s-eems very c-c-clear. The c-c-creditors would b-b-be—no they w-w-wouldn't be—I understand."

"Let me explain it to you," said the president. "In law, if you acquire title to all the claims against your brother, neither he nor his heirs will owe anything to anybody. So far, so good."

"Good," the goodman repeated.

"In equity, if your brother's notes are negotiated—negotiated, do you understand the term?—on the street at so much per cent discount; if some one of your friends happens along that way and buys them up, the creditors having been in no sense constrained to dispose of them, the estate of the late Grandet of Paris is honorably discharged."

"True, b-b-business is business," said the cooper. "That's agreed. But n-neverthel-l-less, you understand there's a d-d-difficulty. I haven't any m-m-money or time, or—"

"You needn't put yourself out. I will undertake to go to Paris—you can pay my expenses, a mere trifle. I will see the creditors there and talk to them and put them off, and it can all be arranged with a small supplementary payment in addition to the assets in liquidation, in order to buy up all the claims."

"Well, we w-w-will see; I c-c-can't and w-w-won't promise, without—If you c-c-can't, you can't. Do you understand?"

"That is true."

"My head is s-s-swimming with all you've been l-l-letting fly at me. This is the f-f-first time in my l-l-life I e-e-ever had to th-th-think about—"

"True, you're not a jurisconsult."

"I am o-o-only a poor v-v-vinedresser, and don't know anything about what you've b-b-been saying; I m-m-must look into it."

"Well—" the president resumed, posing as if to continue the discussion.

"Nephew—!" said the notary reproachfully, interrupting him.

"What is it, uncle?" the president asked.

"Pray allow Monsieur Grandet to tell us what his intentions are. This is a commission of great importance. Our dear friend should tell us defin—"

A blow of the knocker, announcing the arrival of the Des Grassins family, and followed by their entrance and the usual salutations, prevented the notary from finishing his sentence. The notary was well pleased with the interruption; Grandet

was already looking askance at him, and the wen on his nose indicated an internal tempest. But, in the first place, the discreet notary did not consider it becoming for the president of a court of first instance to go to Paris to make a composition with creditors, and to lend his hand to a bit of scheming that offended against the laws of strict probity; and, in the second place, not having heard Père Grandet as yet express the slightest inclination to pay any sum whatever, he trembled instinctively at the thought of his nephew having a hand in the affair. He took advantage therefore of the confusion following the entrance of the Des Grassins to take the president by the arm and lead him into the window recess.

"You have exhibited yourself sufficiently, nephew; enough of such devotion as that. Your longing for the daughter blinds you. The devil! you mustn't go into it tooth and nail like this. Let me steer the ship now and you just help in sailing her. Is it your rôle to compromise your dignity as a magistrate in such a—"

He did not finish: he heard Monsieur des Grassins say to the old cooper as he grasped his hand:

"Grandet, we have heard of the horrible affliction that has befallen your family, the ill-fortune of the house of Guillaume Grandet and your brother's death; we have come to express all the sorrow we feel at this sad occurrence."

"There's no other disaster than the death of the younger Monsieur Grandet," said the notary, interrupting the banker. "And he would not have

killed himself, if it had occurred to him to take his brother into his confidence. Our old friend, who is a man of honor to the ends of his finger nails, proposes to discharge the debts of the Paris house of Grandet. My nephew the president, to spare him the annoyance of what is essentially a lawyer's affair, has offered to go at once to Paris, in order to settle with the creditors and satisfy their just demands."

These words, confirmed by the attitude of the vinedresser, who complacently stroked his chin, greatly surprised the three Des Grassins, who on their way to the house had unsparingly condemned Grandet's avarice, almost accusing him of fratricide.

"Ah! I knew it!" cried the banker, with a glance at his wife. "What did I say to you on our way hither, Madame des Grassins? Grandet is a man of honor to the roots of his hair, and will not allow the slightest stain to attach to his name! Money without honor is a disease. Honor is not unknown in our provinces!—That is well done of you, nobly done, Grandet. I am an old soldier, and I am not skilled in concealing my thoughts; I say bluntly: *mille tonnerres!* it is sublime."

"In that case, the s-s-sublime comes very d-d-dear," rejoined the goodman, as the banker shook him warmly by the hand.

"But this, my good Grandet, with all deference to Monsieur le Président," continued Des Grassins, "is a purely business affair, and requires a shrewd

business man. Won't there be receipts and disbursements to be looked after and interest to be reckoned? I am called to Paris on business of my own, and I could attend to—"

"We will t-t-try to arrange m-m-matters satisf-f-factorily to both without undertaking anything I would not w-w-want to do," stammered Grandet; "because, you see, Monsieur le Président very naturally asked me to bear the expense of his journey."

The goodman did not stumble over these last words.

"What!" said Madame des Grassins; "why it's a pleasure to be in Paris. I would gladly pay for the journey."

She made a motion to her husband as if to encourage him to wrest that commission from their adversaries at any price; then she cast a glance of withering sarcasm at the Cruchots, who had a decidedly crestfallen look. Grandet thereupon seized the banker by one of his coat buttons and drew him into a corner.

"I should have much more confidence in you than in the president," said he. "And then there are snakes in the grass," he added, moving the wen on his nose. "I'm thinking of investing in the Funds; I have a few thousand francs to invest and I don't want to pay more than eighty. Those things go down, they say, at the end of the month. You know all about that, I suppose?"

"Do I! So then I shall have some thousands of capital to invest for you?"

"No great amount to begin with. *Mum's* the word! I want to play this game without anybody's knowing anything about it. You must make a trade for me for the end of the month; but not a word to the Cruchots, it would worry them. As long as you're going to Paris, we can find out at the same time, for my poor nephew, what color trumps are."

"Agreed. I will go by post to-morrow," said Des Grassins aloud, "and I will come for your final instructions at—At what time?"

"At five o'clock, before dinner," said the vine-dresser, rubbing his hands.

The two opposing factions confronted each other a few moments longer.

"It's a good thing to have such kind-hearted relations," said Des Grassins after a pause, laying his hand upon Grandet's shoulder.

"Yes, yes, although I may not s-s-seem so, I am a kind-hearted r-r-relation. I l-l-loved my brother, and I will p-p-prove it if it doesn't c-c-cost—"

"Well, Grandet, we will leave you," said the banker, interrupting him luckily before he had finished his sentence. "If I am to start for Paris sooner than I expected, I must attend to a few matters at once."

"Very well. I myself, in c-c-connection with what you kn-kn-know about, will retire to my ch-ch-chamber of d-d-deliberation, as Président Cruchot says."

"*Peste!* I am no longer Monsieur de Bonfons," thought the magistrate sadly, his face assuming the

expression of a judge who is bored by a tedious argument.

The leaders of the two rival families went away together. Neither of them gave a thought to Grandet's treachery to the vine country that morning; they mutually sounded each other, to no purpose, to find out what their respective opinions were concerning the goodman's real intentions in this new affair.

"Are you coming to Madame Dorsonval's with us?" Des Grassins asked the notary.

"We shall go there later," the president replied. "I promised Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt to look in on her for a moment, and if my uncle agrees, we will go there first."

"*Au revoir* then, messieurs," said Madame des Grassins.

When they were a few steps apart, Adolphe said to his father:

"They're in a jolly fume, aren't they?"

"Hush, my son," said his mother; "they are still within hearing. Besides, what you said was in wretched taste, and smacks of the Law School."

"Well, uncle!" cried the magistrate, when he saw that the Des Grassins were out of earshot, "I began by being Président de Bonfons and I ended by being simply a Cruchot."

"I saw that that annoyed you; but the wind was with the Des Grassins. What a fool you are, with all your intelligence!—Let them go to sea on Père Grandet's *We will see*, and keep quiet, my boy: Eugénie will be your wife none the less."

In a few moments the news of Grandet's generous resolution was current in three houses at once, and nothing was talked about throughout the town but his fraternal devotion. Everyone forgave Grandet the sale of his wine in defiance of the sworn agreement of all the landowners, in their admiration of his honorable instincts; and they lauded to the skies a generosity of which they did not believe him to be capable. It is a part of the French character to wax enthusiastic or indignant, to work itself into a frenzy over the meteor of the moment, the uncertain vagaries of the present. Can it be that collective bodies, peoples, have no memory?

When Père Grandet had closed and fastened his door, he called Nanon.

"Don't unchain the dog and don't go to bed; we have some work to do together. Cornoiller will be at my door at eleven o'clock with the carriage from Froidfond. Listen for him so as to keep him from knocking, and tell him to come in softly. The police regulations forbid all noise at night. Besides there's no need of the quarter knowing that I am taking a drive."

With that, Grandet went up to his laboratory, where Nanon heard him moving about, ransacking, walking back and forth, but very cautiously. He evidently did not wish to awaken his wife or daughter, and was even more anxious not to attract the attention of his nephew, whom he began by cursing when he saw a light in his room.

In the middle of the night, Eugénie, whose mind was full of her cousin, thought that she heard the groan of a dying man, and to her the dying man could be none but Charles: he was so pale, so desperate when she last saw him! perhaps he had killed himself. Suddenly she wrapped herself in a sort of *pelisse* with a hood and started to leave her room. A bright light streaming through the crack of her door made her fear fire at first, but she was soon reassured when she heard Nanon's heavy

steps and her voice mingled with the neighing of horses.

"Can my father be carrying off my cousin?" she said to herself, opening her door a little way with sufficient care to prevent its making a noise, but far enough to see what was going on in the corridor.

Suddenly her eye met her father's, and his expression, vague and unmeaning as it was, froze her with terror. He and Nanon were yoked together by a heavy staff that rested on one shoulder of each and upheld a thick rope to which was attached one of the casks that Père Grandet employed his leisure time in making in his workshop.

"Holy Virgin! monsieur, but it's heavy!" said Nanon in an undertone.

"What a pity that it's nothing but paltry sous!" rejoined the goodman. "Look out and not brush against the candlestick."

The scene was lighted by a single candle placed between two uprights of the banisters.

"Cornoiller," said Grandet, to his keeper *in partibus*, "did you bring your pistols?"

"No, monsieur. *Pardé!* who's going to harm your sous?"

"Nobody, that's true," said Père Grandet.

"Besides, we shall go fast," added the keeper, "your farmers selected for you their best horses."

"Good, good. You didn't tell them where I was going?"

"I didn't know."

"All right. Is the carriage strong?"

"This, master? It will hold three thousand. What do your wretched kegs weigh?"

"Say," said Nanon, "I know. There's near eighteen hundred."

"Will you hold your tongue, Nanon!—you will tell my wife that I have gone into the country. I shall return to dinner.—Whip 'em up, Cornoiller, we must be at Angers before nine o'clock."

When the carriage had driven away, Nanon bolted the front door, released the dog and went to bed with a lame shoulder and no one in the quarter suspected Grandet's departure, far less the object of his expedition. The goodman omitted no possible precaution. No one ever saw a sou in that house, filled as it was with gold. Having learned during the morning, by the gossip at the riverside that gold had doubled in value as a result of numerous armaments begun at Nantes, and that speculators had arrived at Angers to purchase what they could, the old vinedresser had simply borrowed a pair of horses from his farmers, so that he could go there and sell what gold he had, bringing back bills upon the Treasury to the amount necessary for the purchase of his consols, having increased it by the amount of the premium.

"Father has gone away," said Eugénie, who had overheard everything from the top of the staircase.

Silence reigned throughout the house, and the rumbling of the carriage gradually died away in the distance until it no longer echoed through sleeping Saumur. At that moment Eugénie heard in her

heart, even before it reached her ear, a groan that came through partitions and ceiling from her cousin's room. A band of light, slender as a sword blade, came through the crack of the door and cut in twain the banister-rail of the old staircase.

"He is suffering," she said, going up two stairs.

A second groan carried her up to the landing outside his door. It was just ajar and she pushed it open. Charles was asleep with his head hanging over the arm of the old easy-chair; his hand had dropped the pen and was almost touching the floor. The short, sharp breathing that the young man's attitude necessitated terrified Eugénie, who at once entered the room.

"He must be very tired," she said to herself as she saw a pile of ten or twelve letters all sealed. She read the addresses:

"Messieurs Farry, Breilman & Cie., Coach Builders.—Monsieur Buisson, Tailor," etc.

"Doubtless he has arranged everything so that he can leave France at once," she thought.

Her eyes fell upon two unsealed letters. The words with which one of them began: "My dear Annette," brought a film before her eyes. Her heart beat fast, her feet were glued to the floor.

"His dear Annette! He loves, he is loved! No hope for me!—What does he say to her?"

These thoughts passed through her mind and her heart. She read the words everywhere, even on the floor, in letters of flame.

"Renounce him already! No, I will not read

the letter. I must go.—But suppose I should read it?"

She looked at Charles, lifted his head and laid it against the back of the chair, and he submitted like a child who, even in his sleep, knows his mother and receives her attentions and her caresses without waking. Like a mother, Eugénie lifted the hanging hand, and like a mother she softly kissed his hair. "Dear Annette!" A demon was shrieking those words in her ears.

"I know that I am doing wrong, but I will read the letter," she said.

Eugénie turned her head away, for her noble probity rebelled. For the first time in her life, right and wrong confronted each other in her heart. Hitherto she had never had to blush for a single act. Passion and curiosity carried the day. At every sentence her heart swelled more and more, and the poignant glow that stirred her pulses as she read, made the pleasures of first love even more delicious.

"My Dear Annette,

"Nothing less could part us than the disaster which has overtaken me, and which no human foresight could have anticipated. My father has committed suicide, his fortune and mine have entirely disappeared. I am left an orphan at an age when, considering the character of my education, I can still pass for a child; and, nevertheless, I must arise a man from the pit into which I have fallen. I have employed part of the night in arranging my accounts. If I desire to leave France an honest man, and that you cannot doubt, I have not a hundred francs of my own with which to go and try my luck in India or America. Yes, my poor Anna, I shall go and

seek my fortune in the most deadly of all climates. Under those skies it comes surely and quickly, I am told. As to remaining at Paris, I cannot do it. Neither my heart nor my face is made to endure the affronts, the coldness, the disdain, that await a ruined man, the son of a bankrupt! Great God! to owe two millions!—I should be killed in a duel the first week. So I shall not go back. Your love, the tenderest and most devoted that ever ennobled the heart of man, is powerless to draw me thither. Also! my beloved, I have not money enough to go where you are, to give and receive one last kiss, a kiss from which I might derive the necessary strength for my undertaking.—"

"Poor Charles, I did well to read it! I have money and I will give it to him," said Eugénie.

She resumed her reading after wiping away her tears:

"I had never thought of the misery of poverty. Even if I have the hundred louis required for my passage, I shall not have a sou for my outfit. But no, I shall not have a hundred louis, nor one louis. I shall not know what money I shall have left until after the adjustment of my debts in Paris. If I have nothing I shall go quietly to Nantes, ship as a common sailor and begin as many energetic men have begun, who had not a sou at starting and have become rich in India. Since this morning I have looked my future full in the face. It is more horrible for me than for another, petted as I was by a mother who adored me, indulgently treated by the best of fathers, and having had the fortune to win the love of an Anna at the outset of my career! I have never known aught of life but its flowery side! such happiness could not endure. Nevertheless, my dear Annette, I have more courage than a heedless youth could be expected to have, especially one accustomed to the cajoleries of the loveliest woman in Paris and to perfect domestic happiness, upon whom everything smiled

at home, and whose wishes were as laws to his father—Oh! my father! he is dead, Annette—Well, I have reflected upon my position and upon yours as well. I have greatly aged in twenty-four hours. Dear Anna, if, for the sake of keeping me with you in Paris, you should sacrifice all your pleasures and all your luxuries, your toilet and your box at the Opéra, we should not retrench enough to meet the necessary outlay of my dissipated life; nor could I accept so great a sacrifice. And so we part to-day, forever."

"Blessed Virgin! he gives her up. O bliss!"

Eugénie fairly jumped for joy. Charles stirred in his sleep and she shivered with alarm; but, luckily for her, he did not awake. She continued:

"When shall I return? I cannot say. The climate of India soon ages a European, especially one who works. Let us say ten years hence. In ten years your daughter will be eighteen years old; she will be your companion, your spy. Society will be very cruel to you, and your daughter even more so perhaps. We have seen examples of these social judgments and of the ingratitude of young women: let us profit by them. Retain in the depth of your heart, as I will retain in mine, the memory of these four happy years, and be faithful to your poor friend if you can. I cannot demand it, however, because you see, dear Annette, I must conform to my position, look at life from a bourgeois standpoint and figure as closely as I can. Therefore I ought to think of marriage, which has become one of the necessities of my new existence; and I will confess that I have found here at Saumur, in my uncle's house, a cousin, whose manners, face, mind and heart would please you, and who, in addition, seems to me to have—"

"He must have been very tired to stop writing to

her," said Eugénie to herself, finding that the letter broke off suddenly in the middle of a sentence.

She defended him! Was it not impossible that so innocent a child should notice the cold tone of the letter? To young girls of religious bringing-up, ignorant and pure, everything is love as soon as they set foot within the enchanted regions of love. They are surrounded there by the divine light with which their hearts glow, and whose effulgent beams are reflected on their lovers; they color them with the flames of their own passions, and attribute their noble thoughts to them. A woman's errors are almost always due to her belief in the good or her confidence in the true. The words "My dear Annette," and "My beloved," echoed in Eugénie's heart like the sweetest words of love, and caressed it, as the divine notes of the *Venite, adoremus* upon the organ had caressed her ear in her childhood. Moreover, the tears with which Charles's eyes were still wet betrayed the noble qualities of the heart which are certain to fascinate an innocent girl. Could she realize that Charles's love for his father and his sincere grief at his death proceeded less from his kindness of heart than from his father's kindness to him? Monsieur and Madame Guillaume Grandet, by always gratifying their son's caprices, by affording him all the enjoyment that fortune can command, had prevented him from resorting to the horrible scheming of which most youths in Paris are more or less guilty, when, in presence of the allurements of Parisian life, they form desires and

conceive projects which, to their disgust, are interminably delayed and postponed by their parents' lives. The father's prodigality therefore planted in his son's heart a true filial love, without ulterior motive. Nevertheless, Charles was a true child of Paris, accustomed by Parisian customs, and by Annette herself, to weigh the chances of everything, —an old man in a youthful mask. He had received the lamentable education of that society, where, in the course of a single evening, more crimes are committed in thought and speech than are punished at the assizes in a year, where witticisms nullify the noblest ideas, where one is accounted strong only in proportion to the justness of his vision; and where justness of vision means belief in nothing, neither in sentiments nor men, nor even in events: false events are manufactured there. In order to have justness of vision in that society, one must weigh his friend's purse every morning, must know how to be politic, and keep himself on top, whatever happens; must admire nothing, pending results, neither works of art, nor noble deeds; and must consult personal interest as the mainspring of everything. After innumerable escapades, the great lady, the fair Annette, compelled Charles to take a more serious view of life; she talked to him about his future position, passing a perfumed hand through his hair; as she adjusted a curl she made him look at life from a business standpoint; she feminized and materialized him. Twofold corruption, but of a refined and fashionable sort and in the best of taste.

"You're a fool, Charles," she would say. "I shall have much difficulty in teaching you the ways of society. You were very rude to Monsieur des Lupeaulx. I know he's not an honorable man; but wait until he's out of office, then you can despise him at your leisure. Do you know what Madame Campan said to us? 'My children, while a man is in the ministry, adore him; if he falls, help to drag him to the dung-heap. In power, he is a sort of god; dismissed, he is lower than Marat in his sty, because he is alive and Marat was dead. Life is a series of combinations, and we must study them and follow them closely if we would succeed in occupying a desirable position all the time.'"

Charles was too much of a society man, he had been too persistently humored by his parents, too much flattered by the fashionable world, to have noble sentiments. The grain of gold sown by his mother in his heart had been drawn very thin on the Parisian draw-plate; he had employed it superficially and was likely to rub it all away. But Charles was only twenty-one. At that age, the bloom of youth seems inseparable from innocence of soul. The voice, the face, the expression, seem to harmonize with the sentiments. So it is that the sternest judge, the most incredulous solicitor, and the least credulous money-lender always hesitate to believe in the maturity of the heart, in the possibility of corrupt scheming, when the eyes are still swimming in a pure fluid and there are no wrinkles

on the brow. Charles had never had occasion to apply the maxims of Parisian morality, and, down to that day, he was fascinating in his inexperience. But, without his knowledge, selfishness had been instilled into him. The germs of political economy adopted for young Parisians, lying latent in his heart, were certain to bloom and flourish there as soon as he should cease to be an idle spectator and become an actor in the drama of real life. Almost all young girls yield to the alluring promises of such exterior qualities as his; but, even if Eugénie had been as prudent and observing as some provincial maidens are, could she have distrusted her cousin, when his manner, his words and his acts were in perfect accord with the aspirations of her heart? By a mere accident—a fatal accident for her—it was her lot to endure the outpouring of the last genuine emotion that that young heart contained, and to listen, so to speak, to the last sighs of his conscience. She laid aside the letter, which to her eyes, was overflowing with love, and gazed complacently at her sleeping cousin: the fresh illusions of life seemed to her to be still playing over his face; she swore a solemn oath to herself that she would love him forever. Then she cast her eyes upon the other letter, not attaching much importance to her indiscretion in this instance; and, if she began to read it, it was because she desired to obtain additional proofs of the noble qualities which she, like all women, attributed to the man of her choice.

"My Dear Alphonse,

"When you read this letter, I shall have ceased to have any friends; but I confess that while I doubt those men of the world who are especially lavish in their use of the word, I have not doubted your friendship. I depend upon you, therefore, to arrange my affairs for me, and I look to you to dispose to the best advantage of all that I possess. You must ere this know of my plight. I have nothing, and I start at once for India. I have just written to everybody, I believe, to whom I owe money, and I send a list herewith, as accurate as it possible for me to make it from memory. My library, my furniture, my carriages, my horses, etc., will bring enough, I think, to pay my debts. I do not wish to retain anything except such trifles, of no special value, as may be of use in making up my outfit. My dear Alphonse, I will send you from here a formal power of attorney, authorizing you to sell the property in case any objection is made. You will send me all my weapons. Briton you must keep for yourself. No one would be willing to pay what the noble beast is really worth, and I prefer to give him to you in place of the ring a testator usually bequeaths to his executor. Farry, Breilman & Cie. made me a very comfortable traveling-carriage, but it hasn't been delivered; induce them to keep it without claiming any forfeit; if they decline to make that arrangement, avoid doing anything that can possibly cast discredit on my probity, in my present circumstances. I owe the Islander six louis, lost at play, don't fail to pay him—"

"Dear cousin," said Eugénie, dropping the letter, and tripping back to her own room with one of the lighted candles.

With a thrill of keen pleasure she opened the drawer of an old oaken chest, one of the most beautiful specimens of the so-called Renaissance period, upon which the famous royal salamander

could still be distinguished, although half-effaced. She took from the drawer a large red velvet purse, with tassels of gold thread and a border of dingy purl,—a souvenir of her grandmother. She weighed the purse proudly in her hand, and began joyously to verify the forgotten items of her little hoard. First she picked out twenty *portugaises*, all new, coined in the reign of John V., in 1725, the actual value of which in exchange was five *lisbonines* or a hundred and sixty-eight francs sixty-four centimes each, so her father told her; but, on account of the rarity and beauty of the coins, which glistened like suns, their commercial value was a hundred and eighty francs each. *Item*, five *génovines*, or Genoese pieces of a hundred lire, another rare coin, worth eighty-seven francs in exchange and a hundred to the collectors of gold. They came to her from old Monsieur de la Bertellière. *Item*, three Spanish gold *quadruples* of Philip V., coined in 1729, given her by Madame Gentillet, who always used the same words with each one: "This dear little canary, this yellow bird, is worth ninety-eight francs! Keep it carefully, my pet, for it will be the flower of your treasury." *Item*—and these were what her father valued most highly, for the gold in them was twenty-three carats and a fraction fine—a hundred Dutch ducats, coined in 1756, and worth about thirteen francs each. *Item*—and a great curiosity! —the kind of medallions that are most precious in a miser's eyes; three rupees with the sign of the Balance, five rupees with the sign of the Virgin,

all of pure gold, twenty-four carats fine,—the magnificent coinage of the Great Mogul,—each piece being worth thirty-seven francs forty centimes by weight, but at least fifty francs to connoisseurs who love to handle gold. *Item*, the Napoléon of forty francs, received two days before, which she had tossed carelessly into her red purse.

This treasure-house contained new, unused coins, veritable bits of art, which Père Grandet sometimes inquired about and wished to see, in order to dilate to his daughter upon their intrinsic virtues, the beauty of the milling, for instance, the brilliancy of the flat surfaces, the richness of the letters, whose sharp edges were not worn off. But she was not thinking of these rare qualities, or of her father's mania, or of the danger she would incur by divesting herself of a treasure so dear to him; no, she was thinking of her cousin, and she succeeded at last in discovering, after divers errors in computation, that she possessed about five thousand eight hundred francs in actual value, which might be increased to six thousand francs if the coins were put on the market. At the sight of her wealth she began to clap her hands gleefully, like a child compelled to expend the overflow of his joy in artless movements of the body. Thus father and daughter had both reckoned up their fortunes: he, as a preliminary to selling his gold; Eugénie, in order to cast hers into an ocean of affection. She replaced the pieces in the old purse, took it in her hand, and went upstairs without hesitation. Her cousin's

secret misery caused her to forget the hour and the proprieties; then, too, she was strong in her consciousness of right, in her devotion, in her happiness.

Just as she appeared in the doorway with the candle in one hand and her purse in the other, Charles awoke, saw his cousin and stared at her in amazement. Eugénie walked into the room, placed the candle on the table and said in a trembling voice:

"Cousin, I have to ask your forgiveness for a serious offence of which I have been guilty toward you; but God will forgive the sin, if you are willing to overlook it."

"What is it, pray?" said Charles, rubbing his eyes.

"I read those two letters."

Charles blushed.

"How did I happen to do it?" she continued; "why did I come upstairs? Upon my word I have forgotten. But I am tempted not to be too repentant for having read them as they have helped me to know your heart, your mind and—"

"And what?" Charles asked.

"And your plans, your need of a sum of money—"

"My dear cousin—"

"Hush, hush, cousin! not so loud, don't let us wake anybody. Here," she said, opening her purse, "are the savings of a poor girl who wants nothing. Take them, Charles. This morning I didn't know what money was; you have taught me

that it is a means, nothing more. A cousin is almost a brother; you can certainly borrow your sister's purse."

Eugénie, who was as much a woman as a girl, had not thought of the possibility of a refusal, but her cousin remained dumb.

"Well, do you refuse?" she asked, her heart beating so loud that it could be heard in the deep silence.

Her cousin's hesitation humiliated her; but his necessitous condition appealed to her mind more forcibly than ever, and she knelt at his feet.

"I will not rise until you have taken this money!" said she. "Give me an answer, cousin, in pity's name!—let me know if you will honor me, if you are generous, if—"

Recognizing the outcry of noble desperation, Charles shed tears upon his cousin's hands, as he seized her to try and prevent her from kneeling. When she felt the hot tears, Eugénie sprang to her feet, pounced upon the purse and emptied it on the table.

"You will, won't you?" she said, weeping for joy. "Have no fear, cousin, you will be rich. This gold will bring you good luck; some day you will repay me; we will be in partnership, if you please; in fact, I will agree to any conditions you impose on me. But you ought not to attach so much importance to the gift."

Charles was able at last to express his feelings.

"Yes, Eugénie, I should be a very small-minded

creature if I did not accept. But, nothing for nothing, confidence for confidence."

"What do you mean?" she asked in dismay.

"Look you, dear cousin, I have there—"

He interrupted himself to point to a square casket in a leather covering that stood on the commode.

"I have something there, you see, that is as precious to me as my life. That box was a present from my mother. Since this morning I have been thinking that if she could rise from the grave she would herself sell the gold with which her affection led her to furnish that toilet-case so lavishly; but it would seem to me an act of sacrilege if I should do it."

Eugénie pressed her cousin's hand convulsively at the last words.

"No," he continued after a brief pause, during which they exchanged a tearful glance, "no, I do not wish to dispose of it or to risk it in my travels. Dear Eugénie, you shall be its depository. Never did friend entrust anything more sacred to his friend. Judge for yourself."

He took the box, removed the covering, opened it and sadly exhibited to his wondering cousin the interior arrangement and the toilet implements, to which the rich workmanship of the gold added a value far above its weight.

"This that you admire so much is nothing," he said, pressing a spring and disclosing a secret compartment. "Here is something that is worth more than the whole earth, in my eyes."

He took out two portraits, two of Madame de Mirbel's masterpieces, in rich pearl frames.

"Oh! what a lovely woman! isn't she the one to whom you were wri—?"

"No," he said with a smile. "This woman is my mother and here is my father, your aunt and uncle. Eugénie, I beg you on my knees to keep this treasure safe for me. If I should die and lose your little fortune, this gold would make it up to you; and I can leave the portraits with no one but you; you are worthy to keep them; but, if I should die, destroy them, so they may fall into no other hands than yours—"

Eugénie did not speak.

"Well, it is yes, isn't it?" he added, with a winning expression.

When Eugénie heard her cousin's words, she bestowed upon him the first glance of a woman in love, one of those glances in which there is almost as much coquetry as depth; he took her hand and kissed it.

"Angel of purity! between us money will never be of any importance, will it? Henceforth sentiment, which counts for something, will be everything to us."

"You are like your mother. Had she as sweet a voice as yours?"

"Oh! much sweeter."

"Yes, to you," she said, lowering her eyelids. "Come, Charles, go to bed; I insist upon it; you are tired. Until to-morrow."

She gently drew her hand away from her cousin's, and he escorted her to her door, holding the light. When they both stood on the threshold, he exclaimed:

"Ah! why am I ruined?"

"Nonsense, my father is rich, I am sure."

"Poor child," said Charles, putting one foot inside the door and resting his back against the wall, "he wouldn't have let my father die, he wouldn't keep you in such destitution, in a word, he would live very differently."

"But he has Froidfond."

"How much is that worth?"

"I don't know; but he has Noyers."

"Some wretched farm!"

"He has vineyards and meadows—"

"Trifles!" said Charles, disdainfully. "If your father had even twenty-four thousand a year, would you live in this cold, bare room?" he added, putting his other foot inside.—"That's where my treasures will be kept, I suppose?" he said, pointing to the old chest to conceal his thoughts.

"Go back and go to sleep," she said, preventing him from entering a room that was in an untidy state.

Charles withdrew and they said good-night with a mutual smile.

Both fell asleep dreaming the same dream, and Charles thenceforth began to find some flowers in his mourning.

The next morning Madame Grandet found her

daughter and Charles walking together in the garden before breakfast. The young man was still sad, as an unfortunate creature should be who has gone down, so to speak, to the lowest depths of sorrow, and who, by dint of measuring the depth of the abyss into which he has fallen, feels the whole weight of his future pressing upon him.

"Father won't be at home until dinner-time," said Eugénie, observing the anxiety depicted on her mother's face.

It was easy to see in Eugénie's manner, in her expression, and in the singular gentleness of her tone that her mind and her cousin's were running in the same channel. Their hearts had espoused each other, even before they had felt the full strength of the sentiments by which they were united. Charles remained in the *salle* and his melancholy was respected. Each of the three women was fully occupied.

Grandet had forgotten his appointments for the day and a great number of persons came to see him. The slater, the plumber, the mason, the carpenter, laborers, vinedressers, farmers, some to conclude bargains relative to repairs, others to pay rent or to receive wages. Madame Grandet and Eugénie were obliged, therefore, to go and come, and listen to the interminable chatter of workmen and country people. Nanon stowed away in her kitchen the rents paid in produce. She always awaited her master's orders as to what should be kept for the use of the family and what sold in the market. It

was the goodman's custom, as it is the custom of a great number of country gentlemen, to drink his bad wine and eat his rotten fruit. About five in the afternoon, Grandet returned from Angers, having sold fourteen thousand francs in gold, and he had in his waliet, drafts on the royal treasury bearing interest until he should be called upon to pay for his consols. He had left Cornoiller at Angers to look after the half-foundered horses and drive them back slowly after they had had a good rest.

"I am just from Angers, wife," he said. "I am hungry."

Nanon shouted to him from the kitchen:

"Haven't you eaten anything since yesterday?"

"Nothing," was the reply.

Nanon brought in the soup.

Des Grassins came to receive his client's instructions just as the family were about to take their seats at the table. Père Grandet had not even observed his nephew.

"Eat your dinner in peace, Grandet," said the banker. "We will talk while you eat. Do you know what gold is bringing at Angers, where they have sent from Nantes to pick up all they can? I am going to send some there."

"Don't you do it," said the goodman, "they've got all they want. We are too good friends for me not to save you a waste of time."

"But gold is worth thirteen francs fifty there."

"Say, was worth."

"Where the devil did they get it?"

"I went to Angers last night," said Grandet in an undertone.

The banker started in surprise. Then they began a whispered conversation, during which Des Grassins and Grandet glanced at Charles several times. At the moment, probably, when the ex-cooper told him to buy consols for him to an amount that would yield a hundred thousand francs a year, Des Grassins made a second gesture of surprise.

"Monsieur Grandet," he said to Charles, "I am going to Paris; if you have any commissions to entrust to me—"

"None, monsieur, thank you," Charles replied.

"Thank him for more than that, nephew. Monsieur is going up to arrange the affairs of the house of Guillaume Grandet."

"Is there some hope, then?" inquired Charles.

"Why," exclaimed the cooper, with well-feigned pride, "are you not my nephew? Your honor is ours. Are you not a Grandet?"

Charles rose, grasped Père Grandet's hand, embraced him, turned as pale as death and left the room. Eugénie gazed at her father with admiration.

"Well, my dear Des Grassins, adieu and good luck to you; hoodwink those fellows well for me!"

The two diplomatists exchanged a grasp of the hand and the ex-cooper escorted the banker to the door; having closed it behind him, he returned and said to Nanon, as he buried himself in his armchair:

"Give me some currant wine."

But he was too much excited to remain in one

place; he rose, looked at Monsieur de la Bertellière's portrait and began to sing, going through what Nanon called his dancing steps:

Dans les gardes françaises
J'avais un bon papa—

Nanon, Madame Grandet and Eugénie exchanged glances in silence. The vinedresser's exultation terrified them when it reached its climax. The evening was soon at an end. In the first place, Père Grandet chose to retire early, and everybody in his house must be in bed before him; just as, when Augustus drank, all Poland was drunk. In the second place, Nanon, Charles and Eugénie were fully as weary as the master. As to Madame Grandet, she slept, ate, drank and moved according to her husband's wishes. Nevertheless, during the two hours accorded to digestion, the cooper was more facetious than he was ever before known to be and indulged in many of his peculiar apothegms, a single one of which will give the measure of his wit. When he had swallowed his currant wine, he looked at the glass:

"You no sooner put your lips to a glass than it's empty! That is true of ourselves. We can't be and have been. Crowns can't fly and remain in your purse too; if they could, life would be too delightful."

He was jovial and kindly. When Nanon came in with her spinning-wheel, he said:

"You must be tired. Let your hemp go."

"On my word!—*quien,* I shouldn't know what to do with myself," said the servant.

"Poor Nanon! Will you have some currant wine?"

"Ah! when you come to currant wine, I don't say no. Madame makes it much better than the apothecaries. What they sell is a regular drug."

"They put in too much sugar, it hasn't any flavor," said the goodman.

*

The next morning, when the family assembled at eight o'clock for breakfast, they presented a picture of genuine domesticity. Misfortune had brought Madame Grandet and Eugénie and Charles together; even Nanon sympathized with them without knowing it. The four were beginning to form a single family. As for the old vinedresser, his gratified avarice and the certainty of the speedy departure of the dandy without other expense to him than the cost of his journey to Nantes, made him almost indifferent to his presence in the house. He left the two children, as he called Charles and Eugénie, free to conduct themselves as they saw fit under the eye of Madame Grandet, in whom he had implicit confidence in everything that concerned public morality and religion. The delimitation of his meadows and ditches along the highroad, his plantation of poplars on the Loire, and the winter work in his vineyards and at Froidfond occupied all his time.

At this time the springtide of love began for Eugénie. Since the midnight scene, during which she bestowed her treasure on her cousin, her heart had followed the treasure. Sharers of the same secret, their glances expressed a mutual understanding which extended to all their sentiments and drew them closer together, made them more

intimate, by placing them both, as it were, outside of the life that surrounded them. Did not their kinship justify a certain softness of voice, a certain tenderness of expression? And so Eugénie took pleasure in lulling her cousin's sorrow to sleep in the childlike delights of nascent love. Is there not an attractive similarity between the beginnings of love and those of life? Do we not soothe the child with sweet lullabies and loving glances? Do we not tell him marvelous tales that gild his visions of the future? Does not hope continually unfold its radiant wings for him? Does he not shed tears of joy and grief by turns? Does he not quarrel over trifles, over pebbles with which he tries to build an unstable palace, over flowers that are no sooner cut than forgotten? Is he not eager to give wings to time, to hasten life forward? Love is our second transformation. Childhood and love were the same thing as between Eugénie and Charles; it was the first passion with all its childishness, the more soothing to their hearts because they were enveloped in melancholy. Having to struggle beneath mourning crêpe at its birth, their passion was the more in harmony with the provincial simplicity of that ruinous house. By dint of exchanging a few words with his cousin on the well-curb in that silent courtyard; by dint of remaining beside her on the moss-covered bench in the little garden until the sun set, occupied in saying weighty nothings, or sitting meditatively in the perfect tranquillity that reigned between the ramparts and the

house, as one does beneath the arches of a church, Charles came to realize the sanctity of love; for his great lady, his dear Annette, had shown him nothing but its storm and tempest. He abandoned the coquettish, vain, showy Parisian passion, for chaste, true love. He loved the household, whose ways no longer seemed so absurd to him. He came downstairs early in the morning in order to talk with Eugénie a few moments before Grandet appeared to dole out the supplies; and when the goodman's step was heard on the stairs, he fled into the garden. The savor of naughtiness about this morning meeting, which was unknown even to Eugénie's mother and which Nanon pretended not to notice, imparted the piquancy of a forbidden pleasure to the most innocent love on earth. And when, after breakfast, Père Grandet had left the house to visit his properties and inspect his various undertakings, Charles would remain with the mother and daughter, taking a strange and unfamiliar pleasure in lending his aid to wind their thread, in watching them work and hearing them talk.

The simplicity of their almost monastic life, which revealed to him the beauties of those souls to whom the world was unknown, touched him deeply. He had believed such a mode of life impossible in France, and that it did not exist except in Germany, unless in fables and in the romances of Auguste Lafontaine. Eugénie soon became to him the ideal of Goethe's Marguerite, less the sin. From day to day his glances and his words made a deeper and

deeper impression upon the poor girl, who abandoned herself ecstatically to the current of love; she grasped her felicity as a swimmer grasps the overhanging branch of a willow to lift himself out of the water and rest upon the bank. Did not the sorrow of impending separation sadden the most joyous hours of those fleeting days? Every day some incident reminded them of the approaching parting. For instance, three days after Des Grassins' departure, Charles was taken by Grandet before the court of first instance, with the solemnity which provincials attach to such formalities, to sign a renunciation of his claim to inherit from his father. A terrible act of repudiation! a sort of domestic apostasy! He went to Master Cruchot to have two powers of attorney prepared, one for Des Grassins, the other for the friend entrusted with the sale of his personal property. Then he had to take the necessary steps to procure a foreign passport. Lastly, when the simple mourning garments arrived that Charles had ordered from Paris he sent for a Saumur tailor and sold him his useless wardrobe. This step was particularly gratifying to Père Grandet.

"Ah! now you look like a man who is going on a journey and who proposes to make his fortune," he said when he first saw him dressed in a frockcoat of coarse, black cloth. "Good, very good!"

"I beg you to believe, monsieur," Charles rejoined, "that I shall not fail to make the best of my position."

"What's that?" said the goodman, his eyes sparkling at the sight of a handful of gold that Charles showed him.

"I have put together my sleeve buttons, rings, all the trifles I possess, which may be worth something; but as I know no one at Saumur, I intended to ask you this morning to—"

"To buy all that?" Grandet interrupted him.

"No, uncle, but to direct me to an honest man who—"

"Give it to me, nephew; I will go upstairs and calculate what it's worth, and I will come back and tell you, pretty nearly to a centime. Jewelry gold," he said, examining a long chain, "eighteen or nineteen carats."

The goodman put out his huge hand and carried away the heap of gold.

"Cousin," said Charles, "allow me to offer you these two buttons which you can use to fasten ribbons about your wrists. That is a style of bracelet much in vogue at this moment."

"I accept without hesitation, cousin," said she, with a meaning glance at him.

"Aunt, this is my mother's thimble, I treasured it carefully in my traveling-case," said Charles, handing a pretty gold thimble to Madame Grandet, who had longed for one for ten years.

"It is impossible for me to thank you, nephew," said the old mother, as her eyes filled with her tears. "Morning and evening, I will add to my prayers one more urgent than all the others for you:

that for those who travel. If I should die, Eugénie will keep the thimble for you."

"It's worth nine hundred and eighty-nine francs seventy-five centimes, nephew," said Grandet, opening the door. "To save you the trouble of selling it, I'll let you have the money for it—in *livres.*"

The expression *in livres,* as used on the banks of the Loire, means that crowns of six livres are to be accepted for six francs, without deduction.

"I didn't dare suggest it to you," said Charles; "but I hated to think of selling my jewelry in the town where you live. We should wash our dirty linen at home, said Napoléon. I thank you, therefore, for your kindness."

Grandet scratched his ear and there was silence for a moment.

"My dear uncle," said Charles, looking at him uneasily, as if he were afraid of wounding his susceptibilities, "my cousin and my aunt have consented to accept a trifling remembrance of me; I beg that you will accept these sleeve buttons which are useless to me: they will remind you of a poor fellow who, when he is far away, will certainly think much of those who are now the only family he has."

"My boy, my boy, you musn't rob yourself like this—What have you there, wife?" he said, turning eagerly to her. "Ah! a gold thimble.—And you, *fifille?* Phew! diamond clasps.—Well, I will take your buttons, my boy," he added, pressing Charles's hand. "But—you will allow me to—to pay—your

—yes, your passage to India. Yes, I intend to pay your passage. For you see, my boy, in estimating the value of your jewels, I counted only the bare gold, and there may be some additional value in the workmanship. So it's agreed. I will give you fifteen hundred francs—in livres; Cruchot will let me have them; for I haven't a red sou here, unless Perrotet, who is behindhand with his rent, should pay up. Stay, I'll go and see him."

He took his hat, put on his gloves and went out.

"So you are really going?" said Eugénie, looking at Charles with a glance of sadness mingled with admiration.

"I must," he replied, hanging his head.

For some days past Charles's bearing, manners and words had become those of a man deeply afflicted, but who, feeling the burden of immense obligations weighing upon him, derived fresh courage from his misfortunes. He had ceased to sigh and had made a man of himself. So it was that Eugénie had never held him in such high esteem as when she saw him come downstairs in his plain black clothes that suited his pallid face and dejected expression so well. On that day the two women put on mourning and were present with Charles at a *Requiem* service in the parish church for the soul of the late Guillaume Grandet.

At the second breakfast, Charles received letters from Paris and read them.

"Well, cousin, are your affairs progressing satisfactorily?" said Eugénie in a low tone.

"Don't ever ask such questions as that, my child," observed Grandet. "What the devil! I don't tell you my business, why do you poke your nose into your cousin's? Let the boy alone."

"Oh! I have no secrets," said Charles.

"Ta ta ta ta! You'll find out, nephew, that you must hold your tongue in leash in business."

When the lovers were alone in the garden, Charles led Eugénie to the old bench beneath the walnut tree.

"I judged Alphonse aright," he said; "he has behaved splendidly and has adjusted my affairs with consummate tact and friendship. I owe nothing in Paris, all my belongings are advantageously sold, and he tells me that, following the advice of the captain of an East Indiaman, he has invested three thousand francs that he had left, in a supply of European curiosities, which can always be disposed of to good advantage in India. He has forwarded my boxes to Nantes where there is a vessel loading for Java. In five days, Eugénie, we must part, perhaps forever, at all events for a long time. My outfit and ten thousand francs which two of my friends are sending me make a very small beginning. I cannot think of returning for several years. My dear cousin, do not weigh my life against yours; I may die; perhaps an opportunity for you to make a wealthy marriage will present itself—"

"Do you love me?" she said.

"Oh! indeed I do," he replied with an earnestness

of accent that disclosed an equal earnestness of feeling.

"I will wait, Charles. Bless me! my father is at his window," she exclaimed, pushing her cousin away as he moved nearer, to kiss her.

She fled into the passage and Charles followed her; when she saw him, she retreated to the foot of the staircase and opened the double door; then, without any clear idea where she was going, Eugénie found herself near Nanon's den, in the darkest part of the passage. Charles, who had followed on, took her hand, drew her to him, put his arm around her waist and gently forced her to lean upon him.

Eugénie no longer resisted; she received and gave the purest and sweetest, but also the most unreserved of kisses.

"Dear Eugénie, a cousin is better than a brother, for he can marry you," said Charles.

"Amen!" cried Nanon, throwing open the door of her den.

The lovers fled in dismay to the living-room, where Eugénie resumed her work and Charles began to read the prayers to the Virgin in Madame Grandet's prayer-book.

"*Quien!*" said Nanon, "we're all saying our prayers."

As soon as Charles had announced his approaching departure, Grandet bestirred himself to make it appear that he took a very deep interest in him; he displayed great liberality in everything that cost nothing, made it his business to find a trunk-maker,

and told Charles that the man charged too much for his boxes; he thereupon insisted upon making them himself, and used old boards for the purpose; he rose early in the morning to plane and fit and nail his scantlings, and produced some very fine boxes, in which he packed all Charles's effects; he undertook to send them down the Loire by boat and to answer for their arrival at Nantes in good time.

Since the kiss exchanged in the corridor, the hours passed with terrible rapidity to Eugénie. Sometimes she longed to go with her cousin. He who has experienced the most clinging of passions, the duration of which is shortened every day by age, by time, by a fatal disease, by some of the fatalities that beset mankind,—such a one will understand Eugénie's torture. She often wept as she walked to and fro in the garden that was too contracted for her now, as were the courtyard, the house, the town; she was flying in anticipation over the vast expanse of ocean. At last the day before that fixed for Charles's departure arrived. In the morning, in the absence of Grandet and Nanon, the precious casket containing the two portraits was solemnly bestowed in the only drawer of the chest, with the now empty purse; the chest was then securely locked. The transfer of this treasure was not effected without a goodly number of kisses and tears. When Eugénie put the key in her bosom, she had not the courage to prevent Charles from kissing the place.

"It shall never leave that place, my dear."

"My heart will always be there also."

"Ah! Charles, that is not right," she said in a slightly reproachful tone.

"Are we not married?" he rejoined; "I have your word, take mine."

"Yours forever!" were the words twice uttered by each of them.

Never was purer promise made on this earth: Eugénie's innocence had sanctified Charles's love for the moment.

The breakfast the next morning was very melancholy. Despite the gown with gold embroidery and the cross *à la Jeannette* that Charles gave her, even Nanon, who was at liberty to express her sentiments, had a tear in her eye.

"The poor, darling little man who's going to sea! May God guide him!"

At half-past ten the family started to accompany Charles to the Nantes diligence. Nanon had released the dog and locked the door, and she insisted upon carrying Charles's carpet-bag. All the shopkeepers on the old street were in their doorways to watch the procession, which was joined on the square by Master Cruchot.

"Don't you go weeping, Eugénie," said her mother.

"Nephew," said Grandet at the door of the inn, kissing Charles on both cheeks, "go away poor and come back rich; you will find your father's honor intact. I, Grandet, promise you that; for, in that case, it will depend upon you alone to—"

"Ah! uncle, you allay the bitterness of my departure. Is it not the most acceptable present you could make me?"

Not understanding the words of the old cooper, whom he had interrupted, Charles shed tears of gratitude on his uncle's weather-beaten face, while Eugénie pressed her cousin's hand and her father's with all her strength. The notary alone smiled in admiration of Grandet's craft, for he only had understood the goodman's meaning. The four Saumurites, surrounded by several other persons, stood about the carriage until it started.

"*Bon voyage!*" said the old vinedresser when it disappeared over the bridge and the rumbling of the wheels was almost inaudible.

Luckily, Master Cruchot was the only one who heard this exclamation. Eugénie and her mother had gone to a part of the quay from which they could still see the diligence, and were waving their white handkerchiefs; a signal to which Charles replied by waving his.

"Mother, I would like to have God's power for a moment," said Eugénie, when she could no longer see Charles's handkerchief.

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In order not to interrupt the narrative of the events that took place in the bosom of the Grandet family, it is necessary to cast an anticipatory glance upon the goodman's operations at Paris through the agency of Des Grassins.

A month after the banker's departure, Grandet possessed a certificate for a hundred thousand francs a year, purchased at eighty, net. The information afforded at his death by the papers he left behind him did not give the slightest clue to the means that his suspicions led him to adopt, to effect the payment for the certificate. Master Cruchot believed that Nanon was, unwittingly, the faithful agent who transported the funds. About that time the servant was absent five days, the explanation being that she had gone to Froidfond to put certain things in order, as if the goodman were capable of leaving anything in disorder. In relation to the affairs of the house of Guillaume Grandet, all the cooper's anticipations were realized.

The Bank of France, as everyone knows, possesses most exact information concerning the great fortunes of Paris and of the departments. The names of Des Grassins and Félix Grandet of Saumur were known there, and enjoyed the esteem accorded to great wealth based upon immense, unencumbered landed estates. The arrival of the

Saumur banker therefore, with instructions, so it was said, to adjust the affairs of the house of Grandet as a matter of honor, saved the deceased merchant's shade from the disgrace of protested paper. The seals were removed in the creditors' presence, and the family notary proceeded in due form to make an inventory of the property. Des Grassins soon called the creditors together and they unanimously elected the Saumur banker as liquidator, in conjunction with François Keller, the head of a wealthy house which was one of those most largely interested, and conferred upon them all necessary authority to save the honor of the family and their claims at the same time. The credit of Grandet of Saumur and the hope he instilled into the hearts of the creditors through the medium of Des Grassins, facilitated the transactions; there was not a single refractory creditor among them. No one thought of charging off his claim to profit and loss, but everyone said to himself:

"Grandet of Saumur will pay!"

Six months passed. The Parisians had taken up the notes in circulation and stowed them away in the depths of their portfolios. That was the first result the cooper wished to effect. Nine months after the first meeting, the two liquidators paid a dividend of forty-seven per cent to each creditor. The necessary funds were secured by the sale of the securities and goods and chattels of every description belonging to the late Guillaume Grandet, which was conducted with scrupulous fidelity. The

liquidation was carried out with the most absolute honesty. The creditors were glad to acknowledge the admirable and incontestable uprightness of the Grandets. When these eulogies had had a wide circulation, the creditors asked for the balance of their money. They thought fit to write a collective letter to Grandet.

"Here we are," said the ex-cooper, throwing the letter into the fire; "have patience, my good friends."

In reply to the propositions contained in the letter, Grandet of Saumur requested that all evidences of indebtedness in existence against his brother's estate be deposited with a notary, accompanied by receipts for the payments already made, on the pretence of straightening out the accounts and arriving at a correct understanding of the condition of the estate. This deposit smoothed away innumerable difficulties. Generally speaking, the creditor is a sort of maniac. To-day ready to settle, to-morrow breathing fire and blood, and the next day ultra-condescending. To-day his wife is in good-humor, his last child has cut his teeth, everything is going well at home and he does not care to lose a sou; to-morrow it rains, he cannot go out, he is depressed and he says yes to any suggestion that will wind up an affair; the next day he must have guaranties, and by the end of the month he insists upon an execution against you, the hangman! The creditor resembles the house sparrow upon whose tail we tell little children to put a pinch of salt; but he employs

that metaphor against his claim, no part of which he can lay hold of. Grandet had noticed the atmospheric variations of creditors, and his brother's answered all his expectations. Some of them lost their temper and refused point-blank to make the deposit.

"Good! things are progressing finely," said Grandet, rubbing his hands as he read the letters Des Grassins wrote him on that subject.

Some others would not consent to the said deposit except on condition that their rights were categorically admitted, that they were not to abandon any of them, even reserving the right to force a declaration of insolvency. Further correspondence ensued, after which Grandet of Saumur consented to all the reservations demanded. In view of that concession the well-disposed creditors made their obdurate brethren listen to reason. The papers were deposited with the notary, not without some fault-finding.

"The goodman is making fools of us and of you," they said to Des Grassins.

Twenty-three months after Guillaume Grandet's death, many merchants, carried onward by the rush of business at Paris, had forgotten their Grandet claims, or remembered them only to say to themselves:

"I am beginning to think that that forty-seven per cent is all I shall ever get out of that."

The cooper had reckoned upon the power of time, who, he was wont to say, is a good fellow. At the end of the third year, Des Grassins wrote to Grandet

that he had induced the creditors to turn over their claims to him for ten per cent of the two million four hundred thousand francs still owed by the house of Grandet. Grandet replied that the notary and the broker, whose terrible failures had caused his brother's death, were still living, that they might have become solvent again, and that it was advisable to sue them and get something out of them to reduce the amount of the deficit. At the end of the fourth year, the deficit was finally fixed at twelve hundred thousand francs. There were negotiations that lasted six months between the liquidators and the creditors, and between Grandet and the liquidators. At last, being hotly pressed to advance the money, Grandet of Saumur informed the two liquidators, in the ninth month of that year, that his nephew, who had made his fortune in India, had expressed a purpose to pay his father's debts in full; that he could not take it upon himself to pay them fraudulently without consulting him; and that he was awaiting further advices. Toward the middle of the fifth year, the creditors were still held in check with the words *in full*, let fall from time to time by the sublime cooper, who laughed in his sleeve, and exclaimed: THOSE PARISIANS! always accompanying the words with a shrewd smile and an oath.—But the creditors were reserved for a fate unheard of in the annals of commerce. They were still in the same position in which Grandet had so long detained them, at the moment when the exigencies of this narrative require them to reappear on the stage.

When consols were quoted at a hundred and fifteen, Grandet sold out, withdrew about two million four hundred thousand francs in gold from Paris and put them in his little kegs with the six hundred thousand francs compound interest he had received on his certificates.

Des Grassins remained in Paris; for this reason: in the first place, he was chosen deputy; in the second place, he—the father of a family, but bored to death by the dull, wearisome life at Saumur—had fallen in love with Florine, one of the prettiest actresses at MADAME'S theatre, and the quartermaster was born again in the banker. It is useless to comment on his conduct; at Saumur it was deemed highly immoral. His wife was very fortunate in having her own separate property, and in the possession of sufficient brains to carry on the banking-house at Saumur, which continued to do business in her name, in order to repair the ravages in her fortune caused by Monsieur des Grassins' extravagance. The Cruchotins bore so hardly upon the quasi-widow's false position that she made a wretched match for her daughter and was obliged to abandon all hope of an alliance with Eugénie Grandet for her son. Adolphe joined his father at Paris, and went to the bad there, they say. The Cruchots triumphed.

"Your husband has no commonsense," said Grandet to Madame des Grassins, as he lent her some money, on good collateral. "I am very sorry for you, for you're a good little woman."

"Ah! monsieur," the poor woman replied, "who could have believed that on the day he left your house for Paris he was going to his ruin?"

"Heaven is my witness, madame, that I did everything I could do, up to the last minute, to prevent his going. Monsieur le Président was very anxious to take his place, but we know now why he was so persistent in his determination to go there."

Thus Grandet absolved himself from any obligation to Des Grassins.

Under all circumstances women have more causes for suffering than men, and they suffer more. The man has his strength and the opportunity to exert it; he goes about and acts and thinks, his glance embraces the future and he finds consolation therein. So it was with Charles. But the woman remains at home, face to face with the grief from which there is nothing to divert her; she falls to the bottom of the abyss he has opened, measures its depth and often fills it to overflowing with her longings and her tears. So it was with Eugénie. She was initiated into her destiny. To feel, to love, to suffer, to sacrifice herself, will always be the text of woman's life. Eugénie exemplified woman, less those things that console her. Her happiness, collected like nails strewn upon a wall, according to Bossuet's sublime expression, would never fill the hollow of her hand. Sorrow is never slow in coming, and in her case it soon arrived.

On the day following Charles's departure, the Grandet household resumed its usual aspect in

everybody's eyes save Eugénie's, who suddenly found it quite empty. Without her father's knowledge she arranged that Charles's room should remain as he had left it. Madame Grandet and Nanon were willing accomplices in maintaining the *status quo*.

"Who knows that he may not return sooner than we think?" said Eugénie.

"Ah! I'd like to see him here," Nanon replied. "I got used to him. He was a right pleasant, right perfect monsieur, pretty, too, with his hair curled like a girl's."

Eugénie looked at Nanon.

"Holy Virgin, mademoiselle, your eyes look as if your soul was damned! Don't look at other people like that."

From that day Mademoiselle Grandet's beauty assumed a new phase. The serious thoughts of love that slowly took possession of her mind, the dignity of the woman who is beloved, gave to her features that sort of glow which painters express by the halo. Before her cousin's coming, Eugénie might have been compared to the Virgin before the conception; when he had gone she resembled the Virgin Mother; she had given birth to love. The two Marys, so widely different and so well represented by some Spanish painters, constitute one of the most brilliant of the many brilliant symbols in which Christianity abounds. On returning from mass, which she attended on the day following Charles's departure, and which she had made a vow

to attend every day, she purchased a map of the world at the bookstall and nailed it up beside her mirror, so that she might follow her cousin on his journey to India, imagine herself, morning and night, on board the ship with him, see him and ask him a thousand questions:

"Are you well? is nothing the matter with you? Do you think of me as you look at the star whose beauties and usefulness you taught me to know?"

In the morning she would sit pensively under the walnut tree, on the worm-eaten wooden bench with its fringe of gray moss, where they had said so many pleasant, foolish things to each other, where they had built castles in the air concerning the pretty little home they would have. She thought of the future as she gazed at the sky through the small aperture that the walls left open, and at the old fragments of the wall, and the roof over Charles's room. In a word, hers was the solitary love, the true love that persists, that forces its way into every thought, and becomes the substance, or, as our fathers would have said, the *stuff* of life. When Père Grandet's self-styled friends came to play loto in the evening, she was bright and cheerful and concealed her feelings; but all the morning she talked about Charles with her mother and Nanon. Nanon had concluded that she might sympathize with her young mistress' sufferings without failing in her duty to her old master; she would say to Eugénie:

"If I'd had a man of my own, I'd have—followed

him to hell. Yes, I would have—In fact, I'd have been willing to kill myself for him; but—not much! I shall die without knowing what life is. Would you believe, mamselle, that that old Cornoiller—he's a good man all the same—is hanging round my skirts, on account of my savings, just like the people that come here to smell monsieur's pile, pretending to court you? I can see it all, because I know a thing or two still, though I'm as fat as a tower; and d'ye know, mamselle, I like it, though it isn't love."

Two months passed in this way. This domestic life, formerly so monotonous, was brightened by the momentous secret interest that bound the three women together more closely. For them, Charles still lived and went in and out beneath the dingy ceiling of the *salle.* Morning and night, Eugénie opened the dressing-case and gazed at her aunt's portrait. One Sunday morning her mother surprised her busily occupied in searching for Charles's features in those of the portrait. Madame Grandet was thereupon admitted to the appalling secret of the exchange of the dressing-case and portraits for Eugénie's hoard.

"You gave it all to him!" ejaculated the mother in dismay. "For mercy's sake what will you tell your father when he asks to see your gold on New Year's Day?"

Eugénie's eyes became fixed, and the two women passed half of the morning in deadly terror. They were so disturbed that they missed high mass and

did not go to church until the military mass. In three days the year 1819 would end. In three days a terrible scene would be enacted, a bourgeois tragedy without poison or dagger or bloodshed, but, with relation to the actors, more cruel than all the dramas performed by the illustrious family of the Atridæ.

"What will become of us?" Madame Grandet asked, letting her knitting fall upon her knees.

The poor mother had passed through such a sea of troubles in the last two months, that the woolen sleeves, which she needed for the winter, were still unfinished. This domestic circumstance, apparently of trifling importance, had serious results for her. Failing the sleeves, she caught a severe cold in the midst of a profuse perspiration caused by a terrible outburst of wrath on her husband's part.

"I was thinking, my poor child, that if you had entrusted your secret to me, we should have had time to write to Monsieur des Grassins in Paris. He could have sent us some pieces like yours; and although Grandet knows them by sight, perhaps—"

"But where should we have got so much money?"

"I would have pawned some of my own property. At all events, Monsieur des Grassins would have—"

"We haven't time now," said Eugénie, interrupting her mother in a hollow, altered voice. "To-morrow morning we shall have to go to his room and wish him a happy New Year."

"But, daughter, why shouldn't I go to the Cruchots?"

"No, no, that would put me in their power and make us dependent on them. Besides, I have made up my mind. I have done what was right and I have nothing to repent of. God will protect me. May His blessed will be done.—Ah! if you had read his letter, you wouldn't have thought of anything but him, mother."

On the following morning, January 1, 1820, the guilty terror by which the mother and daughter were assailed suggested to them the most natural of excuses for not going to Grandet's room. The winter of 1819 and 1820 was one of the most rigorous of the time. The roofs were covered with snow.

As soon as she heard her husband moving about in his room, Madame Grandet called to him:

"Grandet, do tell Nanon to light a little fire in my room; it's so cold here that I am freezing under the bedclothes. I have reached an age when I need to take care of myself.—Eugénie will come in here to dress," she added after a brief pause. "The poor child might get sick dressing in her own room in such weather. Then we'll come down and wish you a happy New Year in the *salle,* by the fire."

"Ta ta ta ta, what a tongue! how you begin the year, Madame Grandet! You never talked so much before. You haven't been eating bread dipped in wine, I trust?"

There was a moment of silence.

"Well," continued the goodman, whom, for some reason, his wife's proposition evidently suited, "I'll do what you want, Madame Grandet. You are a

good wife in very truth, and I shouldn't want anything to happen to you when you're just maturing, although the La Bertellières as a rule are made of old cement. Isn't that so?" he cried after a pause. "However, we inherited their money, so I forgive them."

He coughed.

"You're in high spirits this morning, monsieur," said the poor woman in a solemn tone.

"I am always gay—

> "'Gai, gai, gai le tonnelier,
> Raccommodez votre cuvier!'"

he added, entering his wife's room all dressed. "Yes, bless my soul, it is cold. We will have a good breakfast, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a *pâté de foies gras* with truffles! I am going to the diligence office to get it.—He should have put a double napoleon with it for Eugénie," he whispered in her ear. "I haven't any gold left, wife. I did have a few old pieces, I can tell *you* that; but I had to let them go in my business."

And, to celebrate New Year's Day, he kissed her on the forehead.

"Eugénie," cried the excellent woman, "I don't know on which side your father slept, but he's in an excellent humor this morning.—Oh! we shall get out of it all right."

"What in the world's the matter with our master?" said Nanon, as she entered her mistress's

room to light the fire. "In the first place, he said: 'Good morning, happy New Year, you great ninny! Go make a fire in my wife's room; she's cold.' But wasn't I struck of a heap when I saw him put out his hand to give me a crown of six francs, and one that isn't clipped a bit! See, madame, look at it. Oh! the fine man! He's a good man, too, I tell you. Some men, the older they grow the harder they get; but he's as sweet as your currant wine, and growing better. He's a right kind, right perfect man—"

The secret of Grandet's cheerfulness lay in the entire success of his speculation. Monsieur des Grassins, after deducting the amount the cooper owed him for discounting a hundred and fifty thousand francs in Dutch notes, and the surplus he had advanced to make up the sum required for the purchase of the hundred thousand francs of consols, had sent him, by diligence, thirty thousand francs in crowns, being the balance of his half-yearly interest, and informed him that the funds were rising. They were then at eighty-nine and for the end of January the most famous capitalists were buying them at ninety-two. In two months Grandet had gained twelve per cent on his investment, he had straightened out his accounts, and was now in a position where he would receive fifty thousand francs every six months, with nothing to pay out for taxes or repairs. He began at last to understand the worth of consols, an investment for which provincials generally exhibit an invincible repugnance,

and he imagined himself, within five years, the possessor of a capital of six millions, amassed without much labor, and, in connection with the value of his landed property, composing a colossal fortune. The six francs given to Nanon were perhaps the reward for a monumental service which she had, without knowing it, rendered her master.

"Well! well! where's Père Grandet going, running about so early as if there was a fire?" said the tradesmen to themselves as they opened their shops.

When they saw him returning from the quay followed by a porter from the Messageries trundling divers well-filled bags on a wheelbarrow, one of them said:

"The water is still running to the river; the goodman was going for his crowns."

"They come to him from Paris and Froidfond and Holland!" said another.

"He'll end by buying Saumur," cried a third.

"He does'nt mind the cold, he's always looking after his business," said a wife to her husband.

"Aha! Monsieur Grandet, if that's in your way, I'll relieve you of it," said a dry-goods dealer, his nearest neighbor.

"Pshaw! it's all sous," the vinedresser replied.

"Silver sous," said the porter in an undertone.

"If you expect me to do anything for you, put a stopper on your *jaw*," the goodman said to the porter, as he opened his door.

"Ah! the old fox, I thought he was deaf,"

thought the porter; "he can hear in cold weather, it seems."

"Here's twenty sous for the New Year, and hold your tongue! Off with you!" said Grandet. "Nanon will bring back your wheelbarrow.—Nanon, are the linnets at mass?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Come, then, fly around! to work!" he cried, loading her with bags.

In a moment the crowns were carried up to his room, where he locked himself in.

"When breakfast's ready, knock on the wall. Wheel the barrow back to the Messageries."

The family did not breakfast until ten o'clock.

"Your father won't ask to see your gold, after all," said Madame Grandet to her daughter, as they returned from mass. "If he does, you can pretend to be very cold. Then we shall have time to fill your purse before your birthday."

Grandet came downstairs thinking that he would at once change his crowns into good honest gold, and reflecting upon his excellent speculation in the public funds. He had decided to invest his income in the same way until the price reached a hundred. Reflections fraught with evil for Eugénie. As soon as he entered the room, the two women wished him a happy New Year, his daughter in a wheedling tone with her arms about his neck, Madame Grandet gravely and with dignity.

"Ah! my daughter," he said, kissing Eugénie on the cheek, "I am working for you, you see! I want

you to be happy. One must have money to be happy. Without money, not a bit of it. See, here's a bright new napoleon; I sent to Paris for it. Bless my soul, there's not a grain of gold in this place. You're the only one who has any gold. Show me your gold, *fifille.*"

"Nonsense! it's too cold; let's have breakfast," Eugénie replied.

"Well, after breakfast then, eh! It will help our digestions. Old Des Grassins sent us this, by the way," he continued. "So, eat, my children, it doesn't cost us anything. He's doing well, is Des Grassins, and I am well pleased with him. The fellow is doing Charles a service, and for nothing, too. He's adjusting the affairs of that poor defunct Grandet very shrewdly.—Ah—h-h!" he exclaimed, with his mouth full, after a pause, "this is good! Eat some of it, wife! it will stay by you at least two days."

"I'm not hungry. I am quite poorly, as you know."

"Ah! yes. You can stuff yourself without fear of bursting your sides; you're a La Bertellière, a good solid woman. You're a little yellow bird, but I like yellow."

The anticipation of an ignominious, public death is less horrible perhaps to a condemned man, than was the anticipation of the events that were to follow that family breakfast to Madame Grandet and her daughter. The more jovially the old vinedresser talked and ate, the greater the weight upon their

hearts. The daughter, however, had something to support her in this crisis: she drew strength from her love.

"For him, for him," she said to herself, "I would suffer a thousand deaths."

At that thought she glanced at her mother with eyes gleaming with resolution.

"Take all this away," said Grandet to Nanon when the breakfast was at an end, about eleven o'clock, "but leave us the table. We shall be more comfortable looking at your little treasure," he said, looking at Eugénie. "Little! faith, no. You possess, in intrinsic value, five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs, and the forty this morning make six thousand, less one. Well, I will give you this franc to make up the round sum, because, *fifille,* you see—Well, what are you listening for? Show me your heels, Nanon, and go about your work," said the goodman.

Nanon disappeared.

"Look you, Eugénie, you must give me your gold. You won't refuse your *pèpère*, my little *fifille*, eh?"

The two women were mute.

"I haven't any more gold, myself. I had some, but I haven't any now. I'll give you your six thousand francs in livres and you can invest them as I'll tell you. You mustn't think about the *dozen* any more. When I find a husband for you, which will be soon, it will be a man who can offer you the finest *dozen* ever heard of in the province. So listen, *fifille.* There's a fine opportunity just now;

you can put your six thousand francs in the government funds, and you'll get nearly two hundred francs interest every six months, without taxes or repairs or hail or frost or tides or any of the things that cut down income. Perhaps you dislike to part with your gold, eh, *fifille?* Bring it to me all the same. I will pick up gold pieces for you, *hollandaises, portugaises, génovines* and the Mogul's rupees, and with those I will give you on your birthdays, in three years you will have half replaced your pretty little hoard of gold. What do you say, *fifille?* Come, lift up your head. Go and get it, pet. You ought to kiss me on the eyes for telling you the secret and mystery of the life and death of crowns. Really, crowns live and multiply like men: they go and come, they sweat and bring forth."

Eugénie rose, but after she had taken a few steps toward the door she suddenly turned about, looked her father in the face, and said:

"I no longer have *my* gold."

"You no longer have your gold!" cried Grandet, rearing like a horse who hears a cannon fired within ten feet of him.

"No, I haven't it."

"You are mistaken, Eugénie."

"No."

"By my father's pruning-knife!"

When the cooper swore like that, the rafters trembled.

"Mother of God! see how pale madame is!" cried Nanon.

"Grandet, your anger will kill me," said the poor woman.

"Ta ta ta ta! the people in your family never die! —Eugénie, what have you done with your gold?" he cried, turning upon her.

"Monsieur," said the girl, at Madame Grandet's knees, "my mother is very ill—look. Don't kill her."

Grandet was terrified at the deathly pallor of his wife's face, that was so yellow a moment before.

"Nanon, come and help me to bed," said the mother in a feeble voice. "I am dying."

Nanon at once gave her mistress her arm, as did Eugénie, and not without infinite difficulty did they succeed in taking her up to her room, for she fell constantly in a swoon from stair to stair. Grandet was left alone. A few moments later, however, he went up seven or eight stairs, and called out:

"Eugénie, when your mother is in bed, come down to me."

"Yes, father."

She did not delay, after she had reassured her mother.

"My daughter," said Grandet, "you must tell me where your treasure is."

"Father, if you make me presents which are not to be at my own disposal, you can take them back again," rejoined Eugénie coolly, taking the napoleon from the mantelpiece and handing it to him.

Grandet pounced upon the napoleon and thrust it into his pocket.

"I rather think I'll never give you anything more! Not so much as that!" he exclaimed, snapping his thumb nail against his front tooth. "So you despise your father, do you? so you have no confidence in him? you don't know what a father is, eh? If he isn't everything to you, he's nothing. Where is your gold?"

"I love and respect you, father, for all your anger; but I will venture humbly to remind you that I am twenty-three years old. You have told me that I'm of age often enough for me to know it. I have done with my money what I chose to do with it, and you may be sure that it is well invested—"

"Where?"

"That is an inviolable secret," she replied. "Don't you have your secrets?"

"Am I not the head of my family? Can't I have my own business?"

"This is my business."

"It must be a very bad business, if you can't tell your father about it, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"It is a most excellent business, and I can't tell my father about it."

"At least, tell me when you disposed of your gold?"

Eugénie shook her head.

"You had it on your birthday, didn't you?"

Eugénie, become as crafty through love as her father was through avarice, repeated the motion of her head.

"Did anyone ever see such obstinacy, or such robbery," said Grandet, his voice rising higher and higher until the whole house rang. "What! here, in my own house, under my roof, some one has taken your gold! the only gold there was in the house! and I am not to know who? Gold is an expensive thing. The most virtuous girls go astray, —give away almost anything; that happens in the noblest families as well as among the bourgeois; but to give away gold—for you did give it to someone, didn't you?"

Eugénie was immovable.

"Did anyone ever see such a girl? Am I your father? If you invested it, you have a receipt—"

"Was I free, or was I not, to do what I thought best with it? Was it mine?"

"But you're a child!"

"Of age."

Overpowered by his daughter's logic, Grandet turned pale, staggered, swore; finding words at last, he cried:

"Cursed serpent of a daughter! ah! wretched child, you know that I love you, and take advantage of it. She murders her father! *Pardieu!* I believe you threw our fortune at the feet of that beggar with kid boots. By my father's pruning-knife! I can't disinherit you, worse luck! but I curse you and your cousin and your children! You will never get any good out of all this, mark my words! If it was Charles—But no, it isn't possible. What! that miserable dandy, pillage me—?"

He glanced at his daughter, who maintained her cold, silent attitude.

"She won't budge! she won't move an eyelash! she is more of a Grandet than I am. At least you didn't part with your gold for nothing? Come, tell me."

Eugénie looked at her father with an ironical expression that offended him.

"Eugénie, you are in my house, your father's house. If you are to remain here, you must obey his orders. The priests order you to obey me."

Eugénie hung her head.

"You offend me in what I hold most dear," he continued, "and I don't want to see you until you are ready to submit. Go to your room. You will stay there until I allow you to leave it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. You heard me, go!"

Eugénie burst into tears and fled to her mother's bedside. After pacing up and down his garden in the snow for a long while, without noticing the cold, Grandet bethought himself that his daughter might be with her mother; and, delighted with the idea of taking her in the act of disobeying his orders, he ran upstairs with the agility of a cat, and appeared in Madame Grandet's room as she was stroking Eugénie's hair, the child's face being hidden against the maternal breast.

"Cheer up, my poor child, your father will get over it."

"She has no father!" said the cooper. "Have you and I, Madame Grandet, really produced a

disobedient child like this? A fine education, and religious before everything! Well, you aren't in your own room, are you? Come, to prison, to prison, mademoiselle."

"Do you mean to deprive me of my daughter, monsieur?" said Madame Grandet, her face flushed with fever.

"If you want to keep her, take her away, get out of my house, both of you. Damnation, where's the gold? what has become of the gold?"

Eugénie rose, glanced proudly at her father, and entered her room, and the goodman turned the key upon her.

"Nanon," he cried, "put out the fire in the living-room."

And he sat himself down in an easy-chair at the corner of his wife's fireplace, saying:

"Of course she gave it to that vile seducer of a Charles, who only wanted our money."

Madame Grandet, in view of the danger that threatened her daughter and of her own sympathy with her, mustered sufficient courage to maintain a cold, indifferent demeanor.

"I didn't know anything about all this," she replied, turning her face to the wall in order to avoid her husband's gleaming eyes. "I suffer so from your violence that, if I can trust my presentiments, I shall not go out of here until I go feet foremost. You might have spared me at this time, monsieur, for I have never annoyed you, at least I think I never have. Your daughter loves you, and I believe

she is as innocent as a new-born babe; so don't torture her, but revoke your sentence. It is very cold and you may be the cause of some serious sickness."

"I will never see her or speak to her. She shall remain in her room on bread and water until she has satisfied her father. What the devil! the head of a family ought to know where the gold goes to from his house. She owned the only rupees that there were in France perhaps, and *génovines* and Holland ducats—"

"Monsieur, Eugénie is our only child, and even if she threw them into the water—"

"Into the water," cried the goodman, "into the water! You're mad, Madame Grandet. What I say is said, as you know. If you want peace in the house, make your daughter confess, worm out her secret from her; women understand each other better in such matters than we men do. Whatever she has done, I won't eat her. Is she afraid of me? Even if she covered her cousin with gold from head to foot, he's in mid-ocean, isn't he? we can't go after him—"

"Well, monsieur—"

Aroused by the nervous crisis that was upon her, or by her daughter's misfortunes, which developed her maternal affection and her intelligence, Madame Grandet was observing enough to notice an ominous twitching of the wen on her husband's face just as she began to reply; she changed her plan without changing her tone.

"Well, monsieur, have I any more power over her than you have? She hasn't said anything to me; she resembles you."

"*Tudieu!* how loosely your tongue is hung this morning! Ta ta ta ta! you're laughing at me, I really believe. Perhaps you have an understanding with her."

He looked fixedly at his wife.

"Really, Monsieur Grandet, if you want to kill me you have only to go on like this. I tell you, monsieur, and, even if it should cost me my life, I will keep on telling you: you are not doing right by your daughter, and she is more reasonable than you are. That money belonged to her and she couldn't have put it to any use but a good one, and God only has the right to know of our good deeds. Monsieur, I entreat you, take Eugénie back! In that way you will lighten the blow your anger has dealt me and perhaps save my life. My daughter, monsieur! give me back my daughter."

"I'll clear out," said he. "My house isn't inhabitable. Mother and daughter argue and chatter as if—Pah! You have given me a cruel New Year's present, Eugénie," he cried. "Oh! yes, weep away! This that you are doing will bring remorse on you, do you understand? What good does it do you to go to communion six times every three months if you give your father's gold on the sly to a lazy vagabond who will consume your heart when you haven't anything left but that to lend him. You'll see what your Charles amounts to with his

kid boots and his touch-me-not air. He has neither heart nor soul if he dares to carry off a poor girl's treasure without her parents' consent."

When the street door was closed, Eugénie left her room and went to her mother's bedside.

"You have been very brave for your daughter," she said.

"You see, my child, what disobedience brings us to!—You made me tell a lie."

"Oh! I will ask God to punish me alone for it."

"Is it true," said Nanon, rushing into the room in dismay, "that mademoiselle's on bread and water for the rest of her days?"

"What does that amount to, Nanon?" said Eugénie, tranquilly.

"Ah! catch me eating *frippe* when the daughter of the house eats nothing but dry bread. No, no."

"Not a word of all this, Nanon," said Eugénie.

"My tongue will be dead, you'll see!"

Grandet dined alone for the first time in twenty-four years.

"So you're a widower, monsieur," said Nanon. "It's very hard to be a widower with women in the house."

"I haven't spoken to you. Hold your tongue or I'll discharge you. What's that in the saucepan I hear sputtering on the stove?"

"It's some fat I'm melting."

"There'll be company this evening, light the fire."

The Cruchots, Madame des Grassins and her son arrived at eight o'clock, and were amazed to see neither Madame Grandet nor her daughter.

"My wife is a little indisposed and Eugénie is with her," said the old vinedresser, whose face betrayed no emotion.

After an hour passed in unimportant conversation, Madame des Grassins, who had been upstairs to pay a visit to Madame Grandet, came down again, and everyone asked her:

"How is Madame Grandet?"

"Not at all well, not at all," said she. "The state of her health seems to me to be really alarming. At her age you must take the greatest care of her, Papa Grandet."

"We'll see about it," replied the vinedresser absent-mindedly.

They all wished him good-night. When they were in the street, Madame des Grassins said to the Cruchots:

"Something new has happened at the Grandets'. The mother is very ill, although she doesn't suspect it. The daughter's eyes are red as if she had been crying a long while. Are they trying to marry her against her will?"

When the vinedresser had gone to bed, Nanon stole into Eugénie's room in her stockings and showed her a pie she had cooked in the saucepan.

"See, mademoiselle," said she, "Cornoiller gave me a hare. You eat so little that this will last you a good week; and it's so cold there's no danger of

its spoiling. At all events you won't have to live on dry bread. That isn't healthy at all."

"Poor Nanon!" said Eugénie, pressing her hand.

"I made it very rich and dainty, and *he* didn't find it out. I bought the lard and the seasoning out of my six francs; I had a right to do what I pleased with it."

With that the servant fled, thinking that she heard Grandet.

*

For some months the old vinedresser visited his wife in her room at different hours in the day, but never saw his daughter, never uttered her name or made the slightest allusion to her. Madame Grandet did not leave her room, and from day to day her condition grew worse. But nothing moved the old cooper. He was obdurate, harsh and cold as a granite pillar. He continued to go in and out as usual; but he no longer stuttered, he talked less than before and was harder to deal with in business than he had ever been. It often happened that he made some error in his calculations.

"Something has happened at the Grandets'," said the Cruchotins and the Grassinistes.

"Pray, what has happened in the Grandet household?" became a conventional question in all classes of Saumur society.

Eugénie went to church under Nanon's escort. When the service was at an end, if Madame des Grassins said a word or two to her, she would answer evasively and without satisfying her curiosity. Nevertheless, after a month or two it was impossible to conceal, from the three Cruchots or from Madame des Grassins, the secret of Eugénie's seclusion. There came a time when pretexts were lacking to account for her unfailing absence. And suddenly, without the slightest clue as to the person

by whom the secret had been betrayed, the whole town learned that Mademoiselle Grandet had been kept locked up in her room, on bread and water and without fire, by her father, since the first day of the year; that Nanon made nice things for her to eat and carried them to her during the night; and it was even known that the young woman could not be with her mother and nurse her except when her father was away from the house.

Thereupon Grandet's conduct was very severely criticized. The whole town put him beyond the pale, so to speak, remembered his underhanded dealing and the hard bargains he drove, and excommunicated him. When he passed, people pointed at him and whispered to one another. When his daughter went down the winding street on her way to mass or vespers, accompanied by Nanon, all the people stood at their windows to scan inquisitively the rich heiress's manner and expression, instinct with angelic melancholy and gentleness. Her seclusion, her father's disgrace, were nothing to her. Did she not see the map of the world, the little bench, the garden, the ruined wall, and did she not taste upon her lips the honey left upon them by the kisses of love? For some time she knew nothing of the gossip current in the town concerning her, and her ignorance was shared by her father. Devout and pure in God's sight, her conscience and her love assisted her to endure the paternal wrath and vengeance patiently.

But one profound grief put all her other griefs to

silence.—Her mother, a gentle, affectionate creature, radiant in the bright light shed by her soul as it drew near the tomb—her mother was drooping from day to day. Eugénie often reproached herself with having been the innocent cause of the cruel, lingering disease that was wearing her life away. Her remorse, although her mother laughed it away, bound her still closer to her love. Every morning, as soon as her father had gone out, she went to her mother's bedside, and Nanon brought her breakfast to her there. But poor Eugénie, sad and suffering with her mother's suffering, would turn her face to Nanon with a mute gesture, and weep, not daring to speak of her cousin. Madame Grandet was always compelled to speak to her first:

"Where is *he?* Why doesn't *he* write?"

Neither mother nor daughter had any idea of distances.

"Let us think of him, mother," Eugénie would reply, "and not talk about him. You are ill, and you come before everything."

Everything meant *him*.

"My children," Madame Grandet would say, "I am not sorry to die. God is very good to me in allowing me to look forward with joy to the end of my misery."

Her words were unfailingly devout and Christian-like. When her husband came to breakfast with her during the early months of the year, and strode up and down her room, she said always the same thing, with angelic sweetness, but with the firmness of

one to whom impending death gave the courage she had lacked during her life.

"Monsieur, I thank you for the interest you take in my health," she would reply when he asked her the usual trite questions; "but, if you wish to allay the bitterness of my last moments and lighten my suffering, take your daughter into favor once more; show yourself a Christian husband and father."

When he heard these words, Grandet would sit down beside the bed and act like a man who sees a heavy shower coming and calmly seeks shelter under a gateway; he would listen silently to his wife and make no reply. When the most touching, most affectionate, most devout supplications had been poured out upon him, he would say:

"You're a little pale to-day, my poor wife."

The most absolute oblivion of his daughter's existence seemed to be engraved upon his granite forehead, upon his set lips. He was not moved even by the tears which rolled down his wife's pale cheeks as she listened to his vague answers, in words that hardly ever varied.

"May God forgive you, monsieur, as I forgive you," she would say. "Some day you will feel the need of indulgence."

Since his wife had been ill, he had not dared to make use of his terrible *ta ta ta ta!* but his despotism was not disarmed by that angel of gentleness, whose ugliness disappeared day by day, expelled by the moral qualities that sought expression in her features. She was all soul. The genius of prayer

seemed to purify and soften the coarser features of her face and transfigured it. Who has not observed this phenomenon of transfiguration on sanctified faces, whereon the qualities of the soul triumph at last over the most harshly outlined features, imparting to them the peculiar animation due to the nobility and purity of elevated thoughts? The spectacle of this transformation brought about by the suffering that consumed the last shreds of human existence in this woman had some effect, although very slight, upon the old cooper, whose character of bronze did not waver. Although his words were no longer disdainful, imperturbable silence, which preserved his superiority as head of the house, was his chosen line of conduct. When his faithful Nanon appeared in the market, sneering remarks and complaints of her master would suddenly assail her ears, but, although public opinion was outspoken in condemnation of Père Grandet, the servant defended him through family pride.

"Well," she would say to the goodman's detractors, "don't we all of us grow harder as we grow old? Why shouldn't he toughen up a bit? Hold your lying tongues. Mademoiselle lives like a queen. She's alone; well, that's what she likes. Besides, my masters have better reasons."

At last, one evening toward the close of spring, Madame Grandet, consumed by grief even more than by disease, having failed, despite her entreaties, to reconcile Eugénie and her father, confided her secret anguish to the Cruchots.

"Keep a girl of twenty-three on bread and water!" cried Président de Bonfons, "and without cause; why, that constitutes *actionable ill-usage; she can protest, as well in as upon—*"

"Come, come, nephew," said the notary, "a truce to your court-room jargon.—Rest assured, madame, that I will put an end to this seclusion to-morrow."

When she heard them speaking of her, Eugénie came out of her room.

"Messieurs," said she, coming proudly forward, "I beg that you will not concern yourself about this matter. My father is master in his own house. While I live in his house I must obey him. His conduct is not to be submitted to the approval or disapproval of the world, he is accountable only to God. I request of your friendship the most absolute silence in this regard. To blame my father would be to assail our own self-respect. I am obliged to you, messieurs, for your interest in me; but you would oblige me much more if you would put an end to the offensive reports which are current in the town, and of which I have learned by accident."

"She is right," said Madame Grandet.

"The best way to prevent people from talking, mademoiselle, is to compel the restoration of your liberty," said the old notary respectfully, profoundly impressed by the beauty which seclusion, melancholy and love had imparted to Eugénie's features.

"Well, daughter, let us leave the matter in Monsieur Cruchot's hands, as he promises to be successful. He knows your father, and knows how to

approach him. If you wish me to be happy during the few days I still have to live, you and your father must be reconciled, at any price."

The next day, following a custom he had adopted since Eugénie's imprisonment, Grandet went into the little garden to walk back and forth a certain number of times. He had selected for his promenade the moment when Eugénie was arranging her hair. When the goodman reached the great walnut tree he stepped out of sight behind the trunk, and stood for some moments gazing at his daughter's luxuriant locks, wavering doubtless between the thoughts his tenacious disposition suggested to him and the longing to embrace his child. He often sat on the little bench of rotten wood where Charles and Eugénie had exchanged vows of undying love, while she glanced at him out of the corner of her eye or in her mirror. If he rose and resumed his promenade, she would take her seat complacently at the window and gaze at the corner of the wall where the prettiest flowers grew, where maidenhair ferns protruded from the crevices, and bindweed, and a white or yellow flower, the *sedum*, that grows in great abundance among the vines at Saumur and Tours. Master Cruchot came in good season—it was a lovely June morning—and found the old vinedresser seated on the bench with his back against the wall, busily engaged in looking at his daughter.

"What can I do for you, Master Cruchot?" he said, when he saw the notary.

"I have come to talk over a matter of business."

"Ah! have you a little gold to exchange for crowns?"

"No, no, it's not a matter of money, it's about your daughter Eugénie. Everybody is talking about you and her."

"What business is it of theirs? Every man's master in his own house."

"Agreed, and every man is free to kill himself too, or, what is worse, to throw his money out of the window."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! why, your wife is very sick, my friend. You ought to consult Monsieur Bergerin, for she is likely to die. If she should die from lack of proper attention, I fancy you wouldn't feel very easy in your mind."

"Ta ta ta ta! you know what's the matter with my wife. Once these doctors get a footing in your house, they come five or six times a day."

"Of course, Grandet, you will do as you think best. We are old friends; there isn't, in all Saumur, a man who takes a deeper interest than I do in what concerns you; that is why I thought I ought to say this to you. At all events you're of age, and you know your own business. Besides, that isn't the matter that brings me here. It's a matter even more serious to you, perhaps. After all, you don't want to kill your wife, she's too useful to you. So consider what position you would occupy, as regards your daughter, if Madame Grandet should

die. You would have an account to settle with Eugénie, as you and your wife hold your property in common. Your daughter will have the right to demand a division of your fortune and to make you sell Froidfond. In short, she will succeed to the property of her mother, from whom you cannot inherit."

These words were like a thunderbolt to the goodman, who was not so strong in legal knowledge as he was in business. He had never dreamed of an auction sale.

"For that reason I advise you to deal gently with her," Cruchot concluded.

"But do you know what she did, Cruchot?"

"What was it?" said the notary, eager to receive Père Grandet's confidence and to learn the cause of the quarrel.

"She gave away her gold."

"Well, wasn't it hers?" queried the notary.

"That's what they all say!" exclaimed the goodman, letting his arms fall with a tragic gesture.

"Do you propose, for a mere trifle," continued Cruchot, "to block the way of the concessions you will have to ask her to make at her mother's death?"

"Oh! do you call six thousand francs a trifle?"

"Eh! my old friend, do you know what the inventory and partition of your wife's property, if Eugénie demands them, will cost?"

"How much?"

"Two, three, four hundred thousand francs, perhaps! Wouldn't everything have to be offered at

auction and sold, to determine the real value? Whereas, if you come to an understanding—"

"By my father's pruning-knife!" exclaimed the vinedresser, turning pale and resuming his seat, "we'll see about it, Cruchot."

After a moment of silence, or of agony, the goodman looked up at the notary and said:

"Life is very hard! It is always full of trouble. Cruchot," he continued solemnly, "you don't wish to deceive me—swear to me on your honor that what you have just sung to me is really the law. Show me the Code, I want to see the Code!"

"My poor friend," the notary replied, "don't I know my trade?"

"Then it is really true? I shall be stripped, betrayed, killed and eaten by my daughter!"

"She is her mother's heir."

"What's the use of having children, then? Ah! I love my wife. Luckily, she's sound; she's a La Bertellière."

"She hasn't a month to live."

The cooper beat his forehead, walked away, returned, and said, with a dismayed glance at Cruchot:

"What must I do?"

"Eugénie can abandon her claim to her mother's inheritance. You don't mean to disinherit her, do you? But, if you want to obtain a concession of that kind, don't be rough with her. The advice I am giving you, my old friend, is against

my own interests. What's my business?—arranging liquidations, making inventories, sales, partitions—"

"We shall see, we shall see. Let's say no more about it, Cruchot. You stir up my vitals. Have you taken in any gold?"

"No, but I have a few old louis, some ten or more, that I'll give you. My good friend, make your peace with Eugénie. Just think, all Saumur is throwing stones at you."

"The rascals!"

"Come, the Funds are at ninety-nine. Be content for once in your life."

"Ninety-nine, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Ha! ha! ninety-nine!" exclaimed the goodman, as he escorted the notary to the street door.

Too much excited by what he had heard to remain at home, he went up to his wife's room and said to her:

"Well, mother, you can pass the day with your daughter; I am going to Froidfond. Be good, both of you. It's our wedding-day, my dear wife: see, here are ten crowns for your altar on Corpus Christi. You've wanted one a long while, so enjoy yourself! Have a merry time, be happy, and get well. *Vive la joie!*"

He tossed ten crowns of six francs on his wife's bed and took her head in his hands to kiss her brow.

"Dear wife, you're getting better, aren't you?"

"How can you think of taking into your house the God who pardons, when you keep your daughter banished from your heart?" said she, with emotion.

"Ta ta ta ta!" said the father in an affectionate tone, "we'll see about that."

"Merciful heaven! Eugénie, come and kiss your father," cried the mother, flushing with joy; "he forgives you!"

But the goodman had disappeared. He was off at full speed to his vineyards, trying to set his chaotic thoughts in order. Grandet at this time was entering upon his seventy-sixth year. His avarice had grown upon him, mainly in the last two years, as all the persistent passions of mankind are wont to grow. Following out an observation made concerning misers, ambitious men, all those whose lives are consecrated to one dominant idea, his sentiment was especially directed toward a symbol of his passion. The sight of gold, the possession of gold, had become his monomania. His despotic temperament had kept pace with the growth of his avarice, and that he should abandon the control of the smallest fraction of his property at his wife's death, seemed to him *contrary to nature*. To let his daughter know the amount of his fortune, to submit to an inventory of all his possessions, real and personal, preparatory to a sale at auction?—

"I might as well cut my throat," he said to himself aloud, as he was examining the new shoots in one of his vineyards.

At last he made up his mind and returned to

Saumur at dinner-time, determined to bend the knee to Eugénie, to coax and wheedle, so that he might be able to die in royal fashion, holding the reins over his millions to his last breath. As the goodman, who had chanced to take his pass-key, crept stealthily up the stairs to his wife's room, Eugénie had just brought the beautiful dressing-case to her mother's bed. They were taking advantage of Grandet's absence to gaze with delight upon Charles's portrait in that of his mother.

"It is his mouth and his forehead," Eugénie was saying as her father opened the door.

When she saw the glance her husband cast upon the gold, Madame Grandet cried:

"O God, have mercy on us!"

The goodman pounced upon the dressing-case as a tiger pounces upon a sleeping child.

"What's all this?" he said, carrying the treasure away to the window.—"Solid gold! gold!" he cried. "Lots of gold! this weighs two pounds.—Aha! Charles gave you this for your pretty coins, did he? Why didn't you tell me, eh?—It's a good bargain, *fifille!* You are my own daughter, I recognize you."—Eugénie trembled in every limb.—"Isn't this Charles's?" he added.

"Yes, father, it's not mine. It is a sacred trust."

"Ta ta ta ta! he took your fortune, and we must replace your little treasure."

"Father!"

The goodman wanted to take out his knife to pry

off a gold panel, and was obliged to put the dressing-case on a chair. Eugénie darted forward to recapture it, but the cooper, who had his eye on his daughter and on the box at the same time, put out his hand and pushed her back so violently that she fell upon her mother's bed.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" cried the mother, raising herself to a sitting posture.

Grandet had drawn his knife and was preparing to raise the gold.

"Father," cried Eugénie, throwing herself on her knees, dragging herself along on them to the goodman's side, and raising her hands to him: "father, in the name of the Virgin and all the saints, in the name of Christ who died on the Cross, in the name of your everlasting salvation, father, in the name of my life, do not touch that! The dressing-case is neither yours nor mine; it was entrusted to me by an unfortunate relative and I must restore it to him intact."

"Why were you looking at it, if it's so sacred? To look is worse than to touch."

"Don't destroy it, father, or you will dishonor me! Father, do you hear?"

"Mercy, monsieur!" said the mother.

"Father!" cried Eugénie in such a piercing tone that Nanon hurried upstairs in terror.

Eugénie grasped a knife that was within her reach and held it aloft.

"What now?" said Grandet calmly, with a mocking smile.

"Monsieur, monsieur, you are killing me!" said the mother.

"Father, if you touch one single grain of that gold with your knife, I will run myself through with this one. You have already brought my mother to death's door, and you will kill your daughter too. Come now, wound for wound!"

Grandet held his knife over the dressing-case, and looked at his daughter hesitatingly.

"Would you be capable of it, Eugénie?" he said.

"Yes, she would, monsieur," said the mother.

"She would do as she says," cried Nanon. "For heaven's sake, be reasonable for once in your life, monsieur."

The cooper looked alternately at the gold and at his daughter for a moment. Meanwhile Madame Grandet fainted.

"There, you see, my dear monsieur, madame is dying!" cried Nanon.

"Here, daughter, let's not quarrel over a box. Take it!" cried the cooper sharply, throwing the dressing-case on the bed.—"Nanon, go and find Monsieur Bergerin,—Come, come, mother," he said, kissing his wife's hand, "it's nothing: we have made up.—Haven't we, *fifille?* No more dry bread; you shall eat whatever you want. Ah! she opens her eyes.—Well, mother, *mèmère, timère,* what's the matter? See, I am kissing Eugénie. She loves her cousin, she shall marry him if she will, she shall keep her little box. But you must live a long time, my dear wife. Come, move about! Listen;

you shall have the handsomest altar that was ever made in Saumur."

"*Mon Dieu*, can you treat your wife and daughter so!" said Madame Grandet in a feeble voice.

"I won't do it any more, I won't," cried the cooper. "You shall see, my poor wife."

He went to his cabinet and returned with a handful of louis, which he scattered over the bed.

"Here, Eugénie, here, wife, these are for you," he said, fingering the coins. "Come, cheer up, wife; get well again and you shan't want for anything, nor shall Eugénie. Here's a hundred gold louis for her. You won't give these away, Eugénie, eh?"

Madame Grandet and her daughter gazed at each other in amazement.

"Take them, father; we need nothing but your affection."

"Oh well! all right," said he, pocketing the louis, "let us live as good friends. Let's all go down to the living-room for dinner, and play at loto for two sous every evening. Have a merry time! Eh, wife?"

"Alas! I would be only too glad, if it would please you," said the dying woman; "but I couldn't get out of bed."

"Poor mother," said the cooper, "you don't know how I love you.—And you too, daughter!"

He put his arm about her and kissed her.

"Oh! how good it seems to kiss one's daughter after a quarrel! my *fifille!*—You see, *mèmère*, we're

all one now.—Go and put that away," he said to Eugénie, pointing to the dressing-case. "Go on, don't be afraid. I'll never mention it again, never."

Monsieur Bergerin, the leading physician of Saumur, soon arrived. Having finished his examination, he informed Grandet positively that his wife was very ill, but that perfect freedom from anxiety, careful diet and careful nursing might postpone her death until the end of the autumn.

"Will it cost very much?" said the goodman; "does she need medicines?"

"Little medicine, but much care," replied the physician, unable to restrain a smile.

"Look you, Monsieur Bergerin," said Grandet, "you're an honorable man, aren't you? I rely on you; come and see my wife just as often as you think proper. Save my good wife's life for me; I love her dearly, you see, although I don't show it, because with me everything goes on inside and tortures my heart. I have a great deal of trouble. Trouble entered my house with the death of my brother, for whom I am putting out a sum of money in Paris—the very eyes out of my head, in fact! and the end is not yet. Adieu, monsieur. If you can save my wife, save her, even if it costs a hundred or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent longing for his wife's restoration to health, because any division of her property would be like death to him; despite his ready compliance at every opportunity with the slightest wishes of the wondering mother and

daughter; despite Eugénie's loving care, Madame Grandet rapidly drew near her end. Day by day she grew weaker and faded away like the majority of women stricken with disease at her age. She was as fragile as the leaves on the trees in autumn. The radiance of Heaven made her countenance as resplendent as the leaves that the sunlight shines through and gilds. It was a death befitting her life, a truly Christian death; does not that mean sublime? In the month of October, 1822, her virtues, her angelic patience and her love for her daughter were particularly noticeable; she expired without giving utterance to the least complaint. A lamb without stain, she went to Heaven, and regretted naught on earth save the gentle companion of her dull life, for whom her last glance seemed to predict innumerable woes. She trembled to leave that ewe lamb, white as herself, alone in the midst of a selfish world, which sought to deprive her of her fleece and her treasures.

"My child," she said to her just before she died, "there is no happiness except in Heaven; some day you will know it."

On the day following her death, Eugénie found additional motives of attachment to the house in which she was born, where she had suffered so much, and where her mother had just died. She could not look at the window and the raised chair in the living-room without shedding tears. She believed that she had misunderstood her old father's heart when she saw that she was the object of his

affectionate attentions; he gave her his arm to go down to breakfast; he gazed at her with an almost kindly expression for hours at a time; in short, he brooded over her as if she were made of gold. The old cooper was so unlike himself, he trembled so before his daughter, that Nanon and the Cruchotins, who were witnesses of his weakness, attributed it to his great age and feared some failure of his faculties as well; but on the day when the family put on mourning, after dinner, at which Master Cruchot, who alone knew his client's secret, was an invited guest, the goodman's conduct was explained.

"My dear child," he said to Eugénie, when the table was cleared and the doors carefully closed, "you are your mother's heir and there are some little matters to be settled between us.—Isn't that so, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Is it necessary to attend to it to-day, father?"

"Yes, yes, *fifille.* I cannot live in my present state of uncertainty. I don't think you want to make me unhappy."

"Oh! father—"

"Well, then, we must settle this business to night."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Why, that isn't for me to say, *fifille.*—Tell her, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle, your good father would not like to sell or divide his property, or to pay enormous taxes on such ready money as he may possess.

Therefore, to avoid those things, it is necessary to dispense with making an inventory of all the property which you and your father now own in common and undivided—"

"Cruchot, are you quite sure of that, to speak of it in this way before a child?"

"Let me have my say, Grandet."

"Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter want to rob me.—Isn't that so, *fifille?*"

"But what must I do, Monsieur Cruchot?" demanded Eugénie, impatiently.

"Well," said the notary, "you must sign this document, by which you renounce your claim to your mother's property, and allow your father the usufruct of all the property now held by you in common, of which he guarantees to you the reversion—"

"I don't understand in the least what you are saying," Eugénie replied; "give me the paper and show me the place where I am to sign."

Père Grandet looked from the paper to his daughter, from his daughter to the paper, in such intense excitement that he was obliged to wipe the cold perspiration from his brow.

"*Fifille,*" said he, "instead of signing that paper, which it will cost a lot to have recorded, if you would just simply renounce your right to inherit from your poor dear mother and rely upon me for the future I would like it much better. In that case I would give you a good round income of a hundred francs every month. Just think, you could pay for

as many masses as you chose for the people for whom you now have them said. What do you say? a hundred francs—in livres?"

"I will do whatever you please, father."

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, "it is my duty to remind you that you are stripping yourself—"

"*Mon Dieu!*" said she, "what difference does that make to me?"

"Be quiet, Cruchot.—It's done, it's done," cried Grandet, taking his daughter's hand and patting it. "Eugénie, you won't take it back, you're an honest girl,' aren't you?"

"Oh! father—"

He kissed her effusively and hugged her as if she would stifle her.

"There, my child, you renew your father's life, but you are giving back to him what he has given you: we are quits. That's the way business should be done. Life is business. I bless you! You're a virtuous girl, who loves her papa dearly. Do what you choose now.—Till to-morrow, Cruchot, he added, glancing at the horrified notary. "You will see that the deed of renunciation is properly drawn up at the office of the clerk of the court."

The next day, about noon, the papers were signed by which Eugénie voluntarily despoiled herself. And yet, notwithstanding his solemn promise, at the end of the first year, the old cooper had not given his daughter a sou of the hundred francs a month. So, when Eugénie mentioned it to him

jestingly, he could not restrain a blush. He went up hastily to his cabinet, returned in a moment and offered her about a third of the jewels he had purchased from his nephew.

"Here, little one," said he in an ironical tone, "do you want to take these for your twelve hundred francs?"

"Oh! father, will you really give them to me?"

"I'll give you as many more of them next year," he said, tossing them into her apron. "So in a short time you'll have all *his* gewgaws," he added, rubbing his hands, overjoyed to be able to trade upon his daughter's sentiments.

Nevertheless the old man, although he was still robust, felt the necessity of initiating his daughter into the household secrets. For two consecutive years, he caused her to arrange the family bill of fare in his presence, and receive the rents in kind. He taught her slowly, one after another, the names and capacity of his vineyards and his farms. About the third year he had accustomed her so thoroughly to all his avaricious ways, and had so successfully turned them into settled habits of her own,—that he had no hesitation in leaving the pantry keys in her custody,—and installed her as housekeeper.

*

Five years passed without any event of importance in the monotonous life of Eugénie and her father. It was an endless repetition of the same things, with the machine-like regularity of movement of the old pendulum. Mademoiselle Grandet's profound melancholy was no secret to anyone; but, although its cause may have been imagined, no word was ever uttered by her to justify the suspicions entertained by all classes of people in Saumur as to the state of the wealthy heiress's heart. Her only associates were the three Cruchots and some of their friends whom they had insensibly introduced into the house. They had taught her to play whist and came every evening for their game.

In the year 1827, her father, feeling the weight of his infirmities, was forced to initiate her into the secret of his investments in real estate, and he instructed her, in case any difficulties should arise, to have recourse to Cruchot the notary, whose uprightness was well known to her. Toward the end of that year, the goodman, at the age of eighty-two, was stricken with paralysis, which made rapid progress. Grandet was given up by Monsieur Bergerin. As she reflected that she was soon to be left alone in the world, Eugénie drew closer to her father, so to speak, and clung more tightly to that last link of affection. In her mind,

as in the mind of every loving woman, love was the whole world, and Charles was not there. She was sublime in her care and nursing of her old father, whose faculties were beginning to fail, but whose avarice instinctively held its own. Thus the man's death presented no contrast to his life. Early in the morning he had his chair moved between the fireplace in his room and the door of his cabinet, which was doubtless full of gold. He lay there without moving, but glancing anxiously from those who came to see him to the iron-sheathed door. He demanded an explanation of the slightest sounds he heard; and, to the notary's great astonishment, he could hear his dog yawning in the courtyard. He awoke from his apparent stupor at daybreak, and at the hour for receiving rents, settling accounts with his vinedressers and giving receipts. He would then move his roller easy-chair along until it was opposite the door of his cabinet. He would bid his daughter open the door and watch while she secretly piled the bags one upon another and closed and locked the door. Then he would return silently to his place as soon as she had returned the precious key, which he always kept in his waistcoat pocket, where he felt it from time to time. His old friend the notary, too, feeling that the rich heiress would certainly marry his nephew the president, if Charles did not return, redoubled his attentions: he came every day to offer his services to Grandet, went at his bidding to Froidfond, to the farms, the vineyards, the meadows, sold the crops, and turned everything

into gold and silver, which was secretly added to the bags heaped up in the cabinet.

At last the days of the death agony arrived, during which the goodman's sturdy frame was struggling with destruction. He insisted upon sitting in his chair by the fireplace, facing the door of his cabinet.

He pulled off and rolled up all the clothes that were put upon him, saying to Nanon:

"Put these away, put these away, so that they cannot be stolen."

When he could open his eyes, in which all his life had taken refuge, he at once turned them toward the door of the cabinet where his treasures were lying, and said to his daughter:

"Are they there? are they there?" in a tone that indicated a sort of panic fear.

"Yes, father."

"Watch the gold!—put some gold in front of me!"

Eugénie would spread some louis on the table, and he would sit for hours at a time with his eyes fixed upon them, like a child who gazes stupidly at one object when he first begins to see; and a pitiful smile escaped him as it might a child.

"That warms me!" he would say sometimes, with a beatific expression on his face.

When the curé of the parish came to administer the sacrament, his eyes, which had apparently been dead for some hours, brightened up at the sight of the Cross, the candlesticks, the silver *bénitier,*

which he gazed at with great earnestness, and the wen moved for the last time. When the priest put the gilt crucifix to his lips for him to kiss the image of the Christ, he made a ghastly gesture as if to seize it, and that last effort cost him his life. He called Eugénie, whom he did not see, although she was kneeling before him and bathing an already cold hand with her tears.

"Bless me, father," she said.

"Take good care of everything! You'll have to settle your accounts with me over yonder," he said, proving by these last words that Christianity is the miser's religion.

Thus Eugénie Grandet found herself alone in the world in that house, having only Nanon upon whom she could bestow a glance with the certainty of being understood—Nanon, the only creature who loved her for herself and with whom she could talk over her sorrows. Tall Nanon was a providence to Eugénie. She was no longer a servant, but a humble friend.

After her father's death, Eugénie learned from Master Cruchot that she possessed real estate in the arrondissement of Saumur worth three hundred thousand francs a year, six millions in the three per cents at sixty and then worth seventy-seven; more than two millions in gold and a hundred thousand francs in crowns, without counting unpaid rents. The total amount of her property was estimated at seventeen millions.

"Oh! where is my cousin?" she said.

On the day on which Master Cruchot handed his client his account of her inheritance, fully settled and liquidated, Eugénie was left alone with Nanon. They sat on each side of the fireplace in that empty *salle* where everything recalled the past, from the raised chair in which her mother used to sit to the glass from which her cousin had drunk.

"Nanon, we are alone!"

"Yes, mamselle; and if I knew where that boy was I'd go on foot to find him."

"The sea lies between us," she said.

While the poor heiress wept thus in her old servant's company, in that cold, dark room, which to her comprised the whole universe, nothing was talked about, from Nantes to Orléans, save Mademoiselle Grandet's seventeen millions. One of her first acts was to settle an annuity of twelve hundred francs on Nanon, who, as she already possessed six hundred francs a year, became a desirable match. In less than a month she passed from the condition of maid to that of wife, under the auspices of Antoine Cornoiller, who was appointed general caretaker of all Mademoiselle Grandet's estates. Madame Cornoiller had an immense advantage over her contemporaries. Although she was fifty-nine years old she did not seem more than forty. Her coarse features had resisted the assaults of time. Thanks to her monastic diet, she kept old age at bay with her ruddy complexion and her iron health. Perhaps she never appeared to so good an advantage as on the day of her wedding. She had all the benefit of

her ugliness, and looked hearty and fat and strong, with a happy expression on her indestructible face, that made more than one person envy Cornoiller his good fortune.

"She has a good color," observed the linendraper.

"She is quite capable of having children," said the salt merchant; "she's as well preserved as if she'd been kept in brine, saving your presence."

"She's well off, and that fellow Cornoiller has made a lucky hit," said another neighbor.

When she left the old house, Nanon, who was beloved throughout the neighborhood, received nothing but congratulations as she went down the winding street to the parish church. Eugénie gave her three dozen knives, forks and spoons for a wedding present. Cornoiller, amazed at such magnificence, spoke of his mistress with tears in his eyes: he would have submitted to be cut in pieces for her. Having become Eugénie's confidential companion, Madame Cornoiller possessed thenceforth a second source of happiness, equal to that of having a husband. She had at last a buttery to open and close, and provisions to give out in the morning, as her deceased master used to do. Then she had two servants to superintend, a cook, and a maid whose duty it was to mend the family linen and make mademoiselle's dresses. Cornoiller combined the functions of keeper and manager. It is needless to say that the cook and the maid selected by Nanon were veritable *pearls*. Thus Mademoiselle Grandet had four servants, whose devotion knew no bounds. The

farmers did not notice the goodman's death, the strict usages and customs he had established were so carefully adhered to by Monsieur and Madame Cornoiller.

At thirty years of age, Eugénie had as yet enjoyed none of the felicities of life. Her melancholy, colorless childhood she had passed in the company of a mother whose misunderstood and bruised heart had never been free from suffering. When she left this world, which she did gladly, the mother pitied her daughter for having to live on, and left a fleeting remorse and everlasting regret in her soul. Eugénie's first and only love was a source of melancholy to her. Having enjoyed her lover's company for a few short days, she had given him her heart between two kisses, stealthily bestowed and received; then he had gone away, putting a whole world between them. This love, frowned upon by her father, had almost cost her her mother's life, and was the source of naught but sorrow, mingled with slender hopes. Thus, up to this time, she had been constantly reaching out toward happiness, expending her strength and receiving nothing in return.

In moral as in physical life there are inspiration and respiration; the soul longs to absorb the sentiments of another soul, to assimilate them to itself in order to restore them richer than before. Without this admirable phenomenon there is no life in the heart; it lacks air, it suffers and pines away. Eugénie was beginning to suffer. To her, fortune was neither a power nor a consolation; she could

exist only through love and religion and her faith in a future life. Love explained eternity to her. Her heart and the Gospel told her of two worlds to come. She was buried night and day in the depths of two infinite ideas which, in her mind, it may be, made but a single one. She withdrew within herself, loving and believing that she was beloved. For seven years her passion had colored everything. Her treasures were not the millions with their accumulating revenues, but Charles's dressing-case, the two portraits hanging by her bed, the jewels redeemed from her father and proudly displayed upon a bed of cotton-wool in the drawer of the chest; and her aunt's thimble, which her mother had used, and which she wore religiously every day as she worked at her embroidery, a Penelope's task, undertaken simply as an excuse for putting that souvenir-laden bit of gold upon her finger.

It did not seem probable that Mademoiselle Grandet would care to marry during her period of mourning. Her sincere piety was well known. And so the Cruchot family, whose policy was shrewdly guided by the old abbé, contented themselves by encompassing the heiress with most affectionate attentions. The living-room in the old house was filled every evening with a party composed of the most ardent and devoted Cruchotins in the province, who vied with one another in singing the praises of the mistress of the house on every key. She had her physician in ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her first lady-in-waiting,

her prime minister, and above all her chancellor, a chancellor who longed to say all sorts of things to her. If the heiress had expressed a wish for a train-bearer, they would have found one for her. She was a queen, and the most adroitly flattered of all queens. Flattery never emanates from great minds, it is the characteristic of petty intellects, which succeed in making themselves still smaller in order to make their way into the vital sphere of the person around whom they flutter. Flattery implies some selfish interest to be served. Thus the persons who embellished Mademoiselle Grandet's living-room every evening, and insisted upon calling her Mademoiselle de Froidfond, succeeded wonderfully well in crushing her with their eulogies. This concert of praise, which was a novel experience to Eugénie, made her blush at first; but, coarse as were the compliments paid her, her ears insensibly became so accustomed to hearing her beauty lauded to the skies, that, if some newcomer had considered her plain, the reproach would have touched her much more deeply than it would have done eight years before. She came at last to love these honeyed words, which she secretly laid at her idol's feet. She accustomed herself by degrees to allow herself to be treated as a sovereign and to find her little court well filled with courtiers every evening.

Monsieur le Président de Bonfons was the hero of the little circle, in which his wit, his manners, his education, his affability, were constantly glorified.

One partisan would remark that he had added considerably to his fortune in the last seven years; that Bonfons had at least ten thousand a year, and that his property, like all the Cruchot property, was surrounded by Eugénie's vast estates.

"Do you know, mademoiselle," said an habitué of the house, "the Cruchots have forty thousand francs a year between them!"

"And their savings," added Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt, an old Cruchotin. "A gentleman from Paris recently offered Monsieur Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his business. He will probably sell it, if he can be appointed justice of the peace."

"He means to succeed Monsieur de Bonfons in the presidency of the tribunal, and is making his plans," said Madame Dorsonval; "for Monsieur le Président will become a counselor, then president of the high court; he has too much influence not to make his way."

"Yes, he's a very distinguished man," said another. "Don't you think so, mademoiselle?"

Monsieur le Président had tried to bring himself into harmony with the part he desired to play. Despite his forty years, despite his harsh, sallow face, wrinkled as almost all judicial countenances are, he made up as a young man, toyed with a cane, took no snuff at Mademoiselle de Froidfond's, always appeared there in a white cravat and a shirt front with broad ruffles, which suggested a family likeness to individuals of the genus turkey. He spoke

to the lovely heiress in a familiar way and addressed her as: "Our dear Eugénie." In fact, except for the number of guests, if we substitute whist for loto and omit the figures of Monsieur and Madame Grandet, the scene varied but little from that with which this narrative opened. The pack was still in pursuit of Eugénie and her millions, but the dogs were more numerous and bayed louder, and surrounded their prey with better concert of action.

If Charles had returned from the Indies he would have found the same individuals and the same interest. Madame des Grassins, to whom Eugénie was always charming and kind, persisted in tormenting the Cruchots. But at this time, as formerly, the figure of Eugénie would have dominated the picture; as formerly Charles would have been the sovereign. Nevertheless there had been some progress. The nosegay presented to Eugénie by the president on her birthday had become a regular institution. Every evening he brought the heiress a huge, magnificent bouquet, which Madame Cornoiller ostentatiously placed in a vase, and secretly threw into a corner of the courtyard as soon as the visitors had departed.

Early in the spring, Madame des Grassins tried to disturb the peace of mind of the Cruchotins by talking to Eugénie about the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ruined family might be rehabilitated if the heiress chose to restore his estate to him by a contract of marriage. Madame des Grassins rang the changes on the peerage and the title of marchioness,

and, mistaking Eugénie's disdainful smile for one of approval, she went about saying that Monsieur le Président Cruchot's marriage wasn't so far advanced as he thought.

"Although Monsieur de Froidfond is fifty years old," said she, "he doesn't seem a day older than Monsieur Cruchot; he is a widower with children, to be sure; but he's a marquis and he will be a peer of France, and there aren't many marriages of that sort going begging in these days. I know of my own knowledge that Père Grandet, when he added the Froidfond estate to his other property, intended to graft himself on the Froidfonds. He often told me so. He was a shrewd man, was the goodman."

"Just think, Nanon," said Eugénie one evening as she was going to bed, "he hasn't written me once in seven years!"

*

While these things were taking place at Saumur, Charles was making his fortune in the East. First of all, his stock of curiosities sold very well. He soon realized the sum of six thousand dollars. The crossing of the Equator caused him to abandon many preconceived ideas; he discovered that the best way to attain fortune, in the tropical regions as well as in Europe, was to buy and sell men. He went to the African coast, therefore, and began to deal in negroes, combining with his traffic in men, dealings in such merchandise as could be disposed of to the best advantage in the different markets to which his business led him. He displayed such untiring zeal and activity in business, that he had not a moment of leisure. His mind was filled with the idea of reappearing in Paris with all the prestige of a great fortune and of capturing a position even more brilliant than that from which he had fallen. By dint of traveling about among men and in all countries, and observing their widely different customs, his ideas were modified and he became a sceptic. He no longer held settled opinions as to the just and the unjust, when he saw things condemned as criminal in one country that were looked upon as virtues in another. Through perpetual contact with selfish interests his heart grew cold, contracted, dried up. The Grandet blood did not fail to fulfil

its destiny; Charles became hard and greedy for gain. He sold Chinese, negroes, swallows' nests, children, artists; he practised money-lending on a large scale. The habit of defrauding the custom-house made him less scrupulous as to the rights of man. He went to Saint-Thomas to purchase at a low price, merchandise stolen by pirates, and carried it to points where there was a demand for it. If Eugénie's pure and noble face accompanied him on his first voyage, like the image of the Virgin that Spanish sailors carry on their vessels, and if he attributed his early success to the magic influence of that gentle maiden's wishes and prayers, later the negresses, the mulattresses, the white women, the Javanese, the Nautch girls, his orgies with women of all colors, and the adventures he had in many countries, completely effaced the memory of his cousin, of Saumur, of the house, of the bench, of the kiss stolen in the passage. He remembered only the little garden surrounded by old walls, because there his hazardous life had begun; but he disowned his family; his uncle was an old dog who had stolen his jewels; Eugénie held no place in his heart or his thoughts,—but she was concerned in his business as a creditor to the amount of six thousand francs.

This conduct and these views explained Charles Grandet's silence. In the Indies, at Saint-Thomas, on the coast of Africa, at Lisbon, and in the United States, the speculator had adopted the pseudonym of Sepherd, in order not to compromise his own

name. Carl Sepherd could, without danger, show himself everywhere, indefatigable, audacious, greedy, like a man, who, having determined to make his fortune quibuscumque viis, makes haste to be done with infamy to remain an honest man the rest of his days. With that system his fortune was swift and sure.

In 1827, therefore, he was returning to Bordeaux on the pretty brig *Marie-Caroline*, belonging to a royalist commercial house. He possessed nineteen hundred thousand francs in three kegs of gold dust, well bound with iron, upon which he expected to make seven or eight per cent upon having it coined at Paris. Upon the same brig was one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber of King Charles, Monsieur d'Aubrion, an excellent old man, who had been foolish enough to marry a woman of fashion, and whose fortune consisted of property in the Antilles. To repair the ravages caused by Madame d'Aubrion's extravagance, he had been to the islands to turn his property into money.

Monsieur and Madame d'Aubrion, of the family of Aubrion de Buch,—whose last chief died before 1789,—being reduced to about twenty thousand francs a year, had a daughter so ugly that her mother was anxious to marry her without *dot*, her fortune being hardly sufficient to live in Paris. It was an undertaking, whose success would have seemed problematical to society in general, notwithstanding the cleverness commonly attributed to women *à la mode*. Indeed Madame d'Aubrion, when

she looked at her daughter, almost despaired of foisting her off upon anybody, even a man intoxicated with the idea of nobility. Mademoiselle d'Aubrion was long and lanky, like the insect her namesake; thin and spare, with a sneering mouth, over which hung a too long nose, large at the end, yellow in its normal state, but bright red after eating, a sort of vegetable phenomenon more disagreeable in the centre of a pale, bored face than in any other. In short, she was such a daughter as a mother of thirty-eight, still lovely, and with pretensions to masculine admiration, might well desire to have. But to counterbalance these advantages the Marquise d'Aubrion had given her daughter a very distinguished bearing, had subjected her to a course of physical training which kept her nose provisionally of a reasonable flesh-like hue, had taught her the art of dressing with taste, had endowed her with pleasant manners, had imparted to her the secret of the melancholy glances which arouse a man's interest and make him believe that he has fallen in with the angel so long and vainly sought; she had shown her how to manage her foot, to put it forward opportunely and draw attention to its dainty size, just when her nose was impertinent enough to blush; in short, she had trained her daughter very satisfactorily. By means of wide sleeves, deceitful corsages, puffed out and carefully trimmed gowns, high pressure corsets, she had obtained such curious results that she ought to have exhibited them in a museum for the information of mothers.

Charles became very intimate with Madame d'Aubrion, whose desire it was to become intimate with him. Some people maintain, indeed, that during the voyage the lovely Madame d'Aubrion neglected no possible means of capturing so wealthy a son-in-law. When they landed at Bordeaux, in June, 1827, Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle d'Aubrion and Charles had rooms in the same hotel and started for Paris together. The D'Aubrion mansion was riddled with mortgages; Charles would clear it of all encumbrances. The mother had already spoken of the pleasure it would give her to place her ground-floor at the disposal of her daughter and son-in-law. As she did not share Monsieur d'Aubrion's prejudices touching the exclusiveness of the nobility, she had promised Charles Grandet to obtain a royal ordinance from good King Charles, authorizing him, Grandet, to assume the name of D'Aubrion, to bear the family arms, and, in consideration of his establishing a *majorat* with a yearly income of thirty-six thousand francs, to succeed Monsieur d'Aubrion in the titles of Captal de Buch and Marquis d'Aubrion. By combining their fortunes and living on good terms together, they might, with the assistance of a sinecure or two, scrape together a hundred thousand francs a year.

"And when one has a hundred thousand a year, a name and a family, when one goes to court—for I will have you appointed gentleman-in-waiting—one becomes whatever one chooses," she said to Charles. "You can take your choice between the

places of master of requests in the Council of State, prefect, secretary of embassy and ambassador. Charles X. is very fond of D'Aubrion; they have known each other from childhood."

Intoxicated with ambition by this woman, Charles, during the passage, had fed upon all these hopes, presented to him by a clever hand in the guise of confidential communications from heart to heart. Believing that his father's affairs had been adjusted by his uncle, he imagined himself safely at anchor in Faubourg Saint-Germain, where everybody was at this time striving to gain admission, and where, in the shadow of Mademoiselle Mathilde's unsightly nose, he would reappear as Comte d'Aubrion, as the Dreux reappeared one day in Brézé. Dazzled by the prosperity of the government of the Restoration, which he had left in a tottering condition; impressed by the striking success of aristocratic ideas, his intoxication, begun upon the vessel, did not abate in Paris, where he resolved to do everything in his power to attain the lofty position to which his selfish mother-in-law encouraged him to aspire. His cousin therefore was nothing more to him than a mere speck in this brilliant prospect.

He saw Annette once more. Like a true woman of the world, Annette strongly urged her old friend to enter into this alliance, and promised him her support in all his ambitious undertakings. Annette was delighted that Charles should marry an ugly, wearisome young woman, for his travels in the

East had made him very fascinating; his face was bronzed, his manners had become bold and decided, like those of men accustomed to cut knots instead of untying them, to command and to succeed. Charles breathed more freely in Paris when he found that he could play a prominent part there. Des Grassins, learning of his return, his fortune and his approaching marriage, called upon him to speak about the three hundred thousand francs with which he could pay all his father's debts. He found Charles in conference with the jeweler from whom he had ordered the jewels for Mademoiselle d'Aubrion's wedding present, and who was showing him the designs. Although Charles had brought superb diamonds with him from the Indies, the setting, together with the silver plate and the substantial but useless jewelry of the young establishment, amounted to more than two hundred thousand francs. Charles received Des Grassins, whom he did not recognize, with the impertinence of a young man of fashion, who had killed four men in India in different duels. Monsieur des Grassins had already called three times. Charles listened to him with an indifferent air, and answered, without fully understanding him:

"My father's business is not mine. I am obliged to you, monsieur, for the trouble you have been kind enough to take, of which I am unable to avail myself. I haven't picked up nearly two millions by the sweat of my brow to throw them at the heads of my father's creditors."

"And suppose your father should be declared a bankrupt a few days hence?"

"Monsieur, a few days hence I shall be called Comte d'Aubrion. You understand of course that that would be a matter of perfect indifference to me. Moreover, you know as well as I, that when a man has a hundred thousand francs a year, his father has never been a bankrupt," he added, politely bowing Monsieur des Grassins toward the door.

On a certain day early in the month of August of that year, Eugénie was sitting on the little wooden bench where her cousin had sworn to love her forever, and where she was in the habit of breakfasting when the weather was fine. The poor girl was amusing herself, on that bright, cheerful morning, by reviewing in her mind the incidents, small and great, of her love, and the catastrophes by which it had been followed. The sun lighted up the pretty corner of the wall, all cracked and cleft, almost in ruins, which the capricious heiress would not allow to be touched, although Cornoiller often told his wife that someone would be crushed under it some day. As she sat musing there, the postman knocked at the house door and handed a letter to Madame Cornoiller, who hurried into the garden, crying:

"Mademoiselle, a letter!"

She gave it to her mistress.

"Is it the one you have been waiting for?" she asked.

Her words echoed as loudly in Eugénie's heart as they echoed between the walls of the courtyard and garden.

"Paris!—It's from him! He has returned."

Eugénie turned pale and held the letter intact for a moment. Her heart was beating so violently that she could not break the seal and read it. Tall Nanon stood beside her, with arms akimbo, and delight seemed to issue like smoke from the folds of her dark face.

"Pray read it, mademoiselle."

"Ah! Nanon, why did he return by way of Paris, when he went away by way of Saumur?"

"Read it and you'll find out."

Eugénie broke the seal with trembling hand. A draft upon the house of *Madame des Grassins and Corret*, of Saumur, fell to the floor. Nanon picked it up.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—"

"I am no longer Eugénie," she thought; and her heart felt oppressed.

"YOU—"

"He used to call me *thou!*"

She folded her arms, not daring to read on, and great tears came to her eyes.

"Is he dead?" Nanon asked.

"He wouldn't write if he were!" said Eugénie.

At last she read the whole letter, which ran thus:

"MY DEAR COUSIN,

"You will be glad, I think, to learn of the success of my undertaking. You brought me good luck; I have returned rich, having followed the advice of my uncle, of whose death, as well as my aunt's, I have been informed by Monsieur des Grassins. The death of our parents is in accordance with the laws of nature, and we must take their places. I hope that you are now consoled. Nothing resists the effects of time, I know by experience. Yes, my dear cousin, unluckily for me, the period of illusions is past. What would you have? in my travels through many countries, I have reflected upon life. I was a child when I went away, I have returned a man. To-day I think of many things of which I did not think in the old days. You are free, my cousin, and I am free as yet; there is nothing, on the surface, to prevent the realization of our little plans; but I am naturally too sincere and loyal to conceal the condition of my affairs from you. I have not forgotten that I do not belong to myself; in my long voyages I have always remembered the little wooden bench—"

Eugénie sprang to her feet as if she had been sitting on live coals, and sat down on one of the courtyard steps.

"—The little wooden bench where we swore to love each other forever; the passage, the living-room with the gray hangings, my attic room, and the night when you, with your kind-hearted delicacy, made my future less hard to bear. Yes, these memories have kept up my courage, and I have said to myself that you were always thinking of me as I was often thinking of you at the hour we agreed upon. Have you looked at the clouds at nine o'clock? You have, haven't you? Therefore, I do not choose to betray a friendship that

I hold sacred; no, I must not deceive you. I have at this moment an opportunity to enter into an alliance which satisfies all my ideas on the subject of marriage. Love in marriage is a chimera. My experience tells me to-day that we must comply with all the social laws, and combine all the advantages enjoined by society when we marry. Now, in the first place, there is a difference in age between us, which would have more effect, perhaps, on your future, my dear cousin, than on mine. I will say nothing of your morals, or your education, or your habits, which are in no respect in harmony with Parisian life, and would probably not fit in with my ulterior projects. It is part of my scheme to have a great establishment, to receive much company, and I think that I remember that you were fond of a tranquil, quiet life. No, I will be more frank and I will make you the arbiter of my situation; it is your right to know it, and you have the right to judge.

"I possess to-day an income of eighty thousand francs. That fortune makes it possible for me to form an alliance with the D'Aubrion family; the heiress of that family, a young woman of nineteen, brings me in marriage her name, a title, the post of honorary gentleman-in-waiting to His Majesty, and a most brilliant social position. I will confess to you, my dear cousin, that I have not the slightest affection for Mademoiselle d'Aubrion; but by marrying her I assure my children a social position the advantages of which will some day be incalculable: from day to day monarchical ideas are regaining lost ground. A few years from now my son, become Marquis d'Aubrion, with a *majorat* of forty thousand a year, will be able to take such a position in the state as he may choose. We owe everything to our children. You see, my cousin, how frankly I lay before you the condition of my heart, my hopes and my fortune. It is possible that you may have forgotten our childish folly after seven years of separation; but, for my own part, I have forgotten neither your kindness nor my words; I remember them all, even those most lightly spoken, to which a young

man less conscientious than myself, with a heart less youthful and less upright, would not give a single thought. When I say to you that I am thinking of making a marriage of convenience solely, and that I still remember our boy and girl love, do I not place myself entirely at your discretion, make you mistress of my fate, and say to you that, if I must renounce my social ambitions, I will gladly content myself with the pure and simple happiness of which you offered me such touching pictures—"

"Tan ta ta.—Tan ta ti.—Tin ta ta.—Toûn!—Toûn ta ti.—Tin ta ta—," etc., sang Charles Grandet, to the air of *Non più andrai,* as he signed:

"Your devoted cousin,
"CHARLES."

"God's thunder! that's what I call doing the handsome thing," he said to himself.

Then he hunted up the draft and added:

"P. S. I enclose in my letter a draft on the house of Des Grassins to your order for eight thousand francs, payable in gold, being the principal and interest of the sum you were kind enough to lend me. I am awaiting the arrival of a chest from Bordeaux containing a few little things which you will permit me to send you in token of my everlasting gratitude. You may send my dressing case, by diligence, to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, Rue Hillerin-Bertin."

"By diligence!" said Eugénie. "A thing for which I would have given my life a thousand times over!"

Appalling and unmitigated disaster! The vessel foundered without leaving a plank or a bit of rope

on the vast ocean of hope. Upon finding themselves cast aside, some women tear their lover from a rival's arms, kill her and fly to the end of the world, or to the scaffold or to the tomb. That is grand, beyond question; the motive of the crime is a sublime passion which overawes human justice. Other women bow their heads and suffer in silence; they go their way, crushed, resigned, weeping and forgiving, praying and remembering to their last breath. That is love, true love, the love of the angels, the proud love that lives on its grief and dies of it. That was Eugénie's feeling after she had read that horrible letter. She looked up at the sky, thinking of the last words uttered by her mother, who, as dying people sometimes do, had cast a penetrating, keen glance forward into the future; and Eugénie, remembering that prophetic life and death, realized her destiny at a glance. She had only to unfold her wings, keep her mind fixed upon Heaven and live in prayer until the day of her deliverance.

"My mother was right," she thought, weeping. "To suffer and to die."

She walked slowly from her garden into the living-room. Contrary to her custom, she did not go through the passage; but she found another reminder of her cousin in the old gray room, where a certain saucer that she used every morning at her breakfast stood upon the mantel-piece beside the old Sèvres sugar-bowl. That morning was destined to be a solemn one and full of incident for her. Nanon announced the curé of the parish. This

curé, a kinsman of the Cruchots, was in the Bonfons interest. Some days before, the old abbé had persuaded him to speak to Mademoiselle Grandet, from a purely religious standpoint, of her duty to marry. When her spiritual adviser was announced, Eugénie supposed that he had come for the thousand francs which she gave every month for the poor, and she told Nanon to go and fetch them; but the curé smiled.

"I have come to-day, mademoiselle, to talk with you about a poor girl in whom the whole town of Saumur is deeply interested, and who, through lack of charity for herself, is not living like a Christian."

"*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur le Curé, you have come at a moment when it is impossible for me to think of my neighbor, I am so engrossed in my own troubles. I am very unhappy; I have no other refuge than the Church; her bosom is large enough to receive all our sorrows, and her sympathy is so fruitful that we can draw upon it without fear of exhausting the supply."

"Well, mademoiselle, if we talk about the girl I refer to, we shall talk about you. Listen! if you wish to ensure your salvation, you have but two courses to pursue: either leave the world or obey its laws; obey your earthly destiny or your heavenly destiny."

"Ah! your voice speaks to me just when I was longing to hear a voice. Yes, God sends you here, monsieur. I will say farewell to the world and live for God alone in silence and retirement."

"It is proper, my daughter, for you to reflect long and seriously before taking such a decided step. Marriage is life, the veil is death."

"Well then, death, death at once, Monsieur le Curé!" said she with horrifying eagerness.

"Death? But you have great obligations to fulfil toward society, mademoiselle. Are you not the mother of the poor, to whom you give clothing and fuel in winter and work in summer? Your great fortune is a loan which you must return, and you devoutly accepted it on those terms. To bury yourself in a convent would be egotism; as for remaining unmarried, you ought not to do it. In the first place, can you manage your great fortune alone? You will lose it perhaps. You will soon have innumerable lawsuits on your hands, and you will be involved in insurmountable difficulties. Take your pastor's word for it: a husband will be of use to you, for you should preserve what God has given you. I speak to you as to a cherished lamb of my flock. You love God too sincerely not to assure your salvation in the face of the world, of which you are one of the brightest ornaments, and to which you set a blessed example."

At that moment Madame des Grassins was announced. She was led thither by thirst for vengeance and by a feeling of desperation.

"Mademoiselle,"—said she. "Ah! there's Monsieur le Curé. I came to talk business with you, but I see you are in solemn conclave, so I'll hold my peace."

"Madame," said the curé, "I leave you in possession of the field—"

"Oh! Monsieur le Curé," said Eugénie, "do return in a few moments; your support is very necessary to me at this moment."

"Yes, my poor child," said Madame des Grassins.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mademoiselle Grandet and the curé in the same breath.

"Don't I know all about your cousin's return and his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Aubrion?—A woman never has her wits in her pocket."

Eugénie blushed and said nothing; but she resolved to affect thereafter the impassive countenance for which her father was famous.

"Well, madame," she retorted satirically, "I must have my wits in my pocket, for I do not understand. Speak before Monsieur le Curé; you know he is my spiritual adviser."

"Very well, mademoiselle, here is what Des Grassins writes me. Read it."

Eugénie read the following letter:

"MY DEAR WIFE,

"Charles Grandet has returned from the Indies; he has been in Paris a month—"

"A month!" said Eugénie to herself, letting her hand fall.

After a pause she resumed:

"I had to dance attendance twice before I could obtain an audience with this future Comte d'Aubrion. Although all

Paris is talking of his marriage, and the banns have been published—"

"He didn't write to me then until—" said Eugénie to herself.

She did not complete her thought, she did not, as a Parisian would have done, cry: "The blackguard!" But her scorn was none the less complete for not being expressed.

"—The marriage is far from certain; the Marquis d'Aubrion won't give his daughter to a bankrupt's son. I have told him of the attention his uncle and I bestowed on his father's affairs, and of the clever manœuvers by which we succeeded in keeping the creditors quiet to this day. The impatient rascal had the face to reply to me, to me who have devoted myself, night and day, for five years to his interests and his honor, that *his father's affairs were not his!* A lawyer would be entitled to charge him a fee of thirty or forty thousand francs, at the rate of one per cent on the amount of the debts. But, patience; there is twelve hundred thousand francs lawfully due the creditors, and I am going to have his father declared a bankrupt. I went into this affair on the word of that old crocodile Grandet, and I made promises in the name of the family. Although Monsieur le Comte d'Aubrion may have but little care for his honor, mine is of much importance to me. Therefore I propose to explain my position to the creditors. Nevertheless I have too much respect for Mademoiselle Eugenie, with whom, in happier times, we hoped to be allied, to act until you have mentioned the matter to her—"

At that point Eugénie coolly returned the letter without finishing it.

"I thank you," she said to Madame des Grassins; "*we will see about that.*"

"At this moment your voice is exactly like your deceased father's," said Madame des Grassins.

"Madame, you have to pay us eight thousand francs in gold," said Nanon.

"True; be good enough to come with me, Madame Cornoiller."

"Monsieur le Curé," said Eugénie, with dignified self-possession, due to the thought she was about to express, "would it be a sin to remain a virgin in the married state?"

"That is a question of conscience which I cannot answer. If you would like to know what the illustrious Sanchez has to say about it in his treatise *De Matrimonio,* I can tell you to-morrow."

The curé took his leave. Mademoiselle Grandet went up into her father's cabinet and passed the day there alone, refusing to go downstairs to dinner notwithstanding Nanon's urgent entreaties. In the evening, at the time when her guests usually arrived, she appeared.

The Grandet salon had never been so full as it was that evening. The news of Charles's return and his foolish treachery had been circulated through the town. But alert as the curiosity of the guests was, it was not gratified. Eugénie, who was prepared for it, did not allow any trace of the cruel emotions by which her heart was torn to appear upon her placid countenance. She was able to reply with a smile to those who attempted to

demonstrate their interest in her by melancholy looks or words. In short, she was able to conceal her misery under the veil of courtesy. About nine o'clock the games came to an end, and the players left their seats, paid their losses and discussed the last hands as they joined the circle of talkers. Just as the party rose in a body to leave the room there was a dramatic incident that resounded through Saumur, and thence through the arrondissement and the four adjoining prefectures.

"Remain, Monsieur le Président," said Eugénie to Monsieur de Bonfons, as she saw him take his cane.

There was not a person in the numerous assemblage who was not deeply moved by those words. The president turned pale and was obliged to sit down.

"The millions are the president's," said Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt.

"Président de Bonfons is to marry Mademoiselle Grandet, that's very evident," cried Madame Dorsonval.

"That's the best hand in the game," said the abbé.

"It's a fine *schleem*," said the notary.

Each one made his *bon mot* or his pun and they all saw the heiress mounted on her millions as upon a pedestal. The drama, begun nine years before, was drawing near its close. In the presence of all Saumur, to bid the president remain was equivalent to announcing that she proposed to make him her

husband, was it not? In small towns the proprieties are so strictly observed that an infraction of this nature constitutes the most solemn of promises.

"Monsieur le Président," said Eugénie in an unsteady voice, when they were alone, "I know what it is that you like in me. Swear that you will leave me free throughout my life, that you will never refer to any of the rights that marriage might give you over me, and my hand is yours. Oh!" she continued as she saw him preparing to kneel, "I have not finished. I do not wish to deceive you, monsieur. I have an inextinguishable passion in my heart. Friendship is the only sentiment I can offer my husband; I do not propose either to insult him or to disregard the laws of my heart. But you can possess my hand and my fortune only at the price of a very great service."

"I am ready to do anything," said the president.

"Here are fifteen hundred thousand francs, Monsieur le Président," said she, taking from her breast a certificate for one hundred shares of the Bank of France; "start for Paris, not to-morrow, not to-night, but this very moment. Go at once to Monsieur des Grassins, learn from him the names of all my uncle's creditors, call them together, pay all that his estate can fairly be said to owe, principal and interest at five per cent from the day the debt was contracted to the day on which it is paid, and see that a general receipt is given, attested by a notary, in proper form. You are a magistrate and I rely entirely upon you in this matter. You are a gallant,

loyal man; on the faith of your promise I will face the perils of life under the shelter of your name. We will be mutually indulgent to each other. We have known each other so long, we are almost relations; you would not want to make me unhappy."

The president fell at the wealthy heiress's feet, his heart beating fast with joy and anguish.

"I will be your slave!" said he.

"When you have the receipt, monsieur," she rejoined, glancing coldly at him, "you will take it with all the papers to my cousin Grandet, and hand him this letter. On your return I will keep my word."

The president understood that he owed Mademoiselle Grandet to a lover's pique; wherefore he bestirred himself to execute her orders with the greatest promptitude, so that there might be no reconciliation between the lovers.

When Monsieur de Bonfons had taken his leave, Eugénie threw herself into a chair and wept bitterly. It was all over.

The president traveled by post and reached Paris the following evening. In the morning of the day after his arrival he called upon Des Grassins. The magistrate summoned the creditors to meet at the notary's office where the notes were deposited, and not one of them failed to attend. Although they were creditors, in justice to them it must be said that they were prompt. Président de Bonfons then and there paid them the full amount of their claims, principal and interest, in the name of Mademoiselle Grandet.

The payment of the interest was one of the most noteworthy events of the time in Parisian business circles. When the discharges were duly recorded, and Des Grassins paid for his trouble by a present of fifty thousand francs which Eugénie had set aside for him, the president betook himself to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, and found Charles just as he was returning to his apartments after a crushing interview with his father-in-law. The old marquis had just informed him that his daughter should not belong to him until all of Guillaume Grandet's creditors should be paid.

The president first of all handed him the following letter:

"MY COUSIN,

" Monsieur le Président de Bonfons has undertaken to hand you receipts for all the sums owed by my uncle, and also a document in which I acknowledge having received the necessary funds from you. I have heard some talk of bankruptcy! It occurred to me that a bankrupt's son might not be able to marry Mademoiselle d'Aubrion. Yes, cousin, you judged correctly of my morals and my mind; it is undoubtedly true that I know nothing of the world, its intrigues or its customs, and I should not be able to afford you such pleasure as you expect to find in the world. Be happy in accordance with the social conventions to which you sacrifice our first love. To make your happiness complete I can do no more than offer you your father's honor. Adieu, you will always have a faithful friend in your cousin,

" EUGÉNIE."

The president smiled at the exclamation the

ambitious young man could not restrain when the authenticated discharge was placed in his hands.

"We can reciprocally announce our approaching marriages," said he.

"Ah! you are to marry Eugénie? Good, I am very glad to hear it; she's a good girl. By the way," he added, as a ray of light suddenly flashed through his mind, "she must be rich?"

"Four days ago," rejoined the president in a bantering tone, "she had nearly nineteen millions; but she has only about seventeen to-day."

Charles gazed stupidly at his interlocutor.

"Seventeen—mil—"

"Seventeen millions, yes, monsieur. Mademoiselle Grandet and I together will have seven hundred and fifty thousand francs a year."

"My dear cousin," said Charles, recovering his self-possession to some extent, "we can help each other along."

"Agreed," said the president. "Here's a little box also, which I am to deliver to you personally," he added, placing the box that contained the dressing-case on the table.

"Well, my dear boy," said Madame la Marquise d'Aubrion, entering the room, without paying any heed to Cruchot, "don't you be at all alarmed at what poor Monsieur d'Aubrion has just said to you, for the Duchesse de Chaulieu had turned his head. I tell you again, nothing shall prevent your marriage."

"Nothing, madame," said Charles. "The three

millions formerly owed by my father were paid yesterday."

"In cash?" said she.

"In full, principal and interest, and I propose to rehabilitate his memory."

"What nonsense!" cried the mother-in-law.—"Who is this gentleman?" she said in her son-in-law's ear, as her eye fell upon Cruchot.

"My man of business," he answered in an undertone.

The marchioness nodded disdainfully to Monsieur de Bonfons and left the room.

"We are helping each other along already," said the president, taking his hat. "Adieu, cousin."

"That Saumur cockatoo is laughing at me. I'd like right well to put six inches of steel into his belly."

The president had disappeared.

*

Three days later Monsieur de Bonfons, having returned to Saumur, announced his marriage to Eugénie. Within six months, he was appointed councillor to the royal court at Angers. Before leaving Saumur, Eugénie had the gold in the jewels she had cherished so long, together with her cousin's eight thousand francs, melted down and made into a gold monstrance, which she presented to the parish church where she had prayed to God so long and so earnestly for *him!* She divided her time between Angers and Saumur. Her husband, who exhibited his devotion under trying circumstances, became president of the chamber and, after a few years, first president. He impatiently awaited a general election in order to obtain a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. He already had his eye on the peerage, and then—

"Then the king will be his cousin, won't he?" said Nanon, tall Nanon, Madame Cornoiller, good bourgeoise of Saumur, when her mistress informed her of the grandeur that was in store for her.

Nevertheless Monsieur le Président de Bonfons—he had finally done away with the name of Cruchot—did not succeed in realizing any of his ambitious ideas. He died a week after he was elected deputy from Saumur. God, who sees everything, and whose blows are never misplaced, chose to punish

him doubtless for his scheming and for the legal acumen with which, *accurante Cruchot*, he had drawn up his marriage contract, wherein the contracting parties gave to each other, *in case they should have no children, all and singular their property, real and personal, without exception or reservation, in fee simple, dispensing with the formality of an inventory; nor shall the omission of said inventory be alleged against the heirs or assigns of either, it being intended that the said donation, etc.* This clause will explain the profound respect which the president constantly displayed for Madame de Bonfons' wishes and for her solitude. The ladies referred to Monsieur le Premier Président as one of the most delicate-minded of men, they pitied him and often went so far as to reproach Eugénie for her grief and her passion, but as women have the art of reproaching a woman, with the most cruel circumspection.

"Madame la Présidente de Bonfons must be very ill to leave her husband alone. Poor little woman! Will she be better soon? What in the world is the matter with her—gastritis, cancer? Why doesn't she see a doctor? She has been growing yellow for some time; she ought to go and consult the famous men in Paris. How is it she doesn't want a child? She's very fond of her husband, they say; why not present him with an heir, holding the position he does? Do you know, I think it's horrible; and if it's the result of a mere whim, it's very reprehensible—Poor president!"

Endowed with that refined tact which the recluse exercises in his constant meditations, and by the exquisitely keen sight with which he descries everything that falls within his sphere, Eugénie, accustomed by unhappiness and by her recent education to divine everything, knew that the president desired her death in order to enter into possession of that immense fortune, still farther increased by the property of his uncle the notary and of his uncle the abbé, whom God had seen fit to summon. The poor recluse was sorry for the president. Providence avenged her for the scheming and the shameful indifference of a husband who respected, as the strongest of guaranties, the hopeless passion upon which Eugénie fed. To give life to a child would be to destroy the selfish hopes, the ambitious delight fostered by the first president. God therefore tossed heaps of gold into the lap of his prisoner, to whom gold was of no value, who aspired to Heaven, who lived a pious, charitable life, in holy meditation, who, in secret, constantly assisted the unfortunate.

Madame de Bonfons at thirty-three is a widow, with an income of eight hundred thousand francs a year, still beautiful, but with the beauty of a woman who is approaching forty. Her face is pale, placid and calm. Her voice is soft and low, her manners are simple. She has all the noble dignity of sorrow, the sanctity of one whose mind has not been soiled by contact with the world, but she has the rigidity of the old maid and the niggardly habits inculcated by the narrow life of the provinces. Despite her

eight hundred thousand francs a year, she lives as poor Eugénie Grandet lived, lights a fire in her room only on the days on which her father would have permitted a fire on the hearth in the old living-room, and extinguishes it in conformity with the programme in vogue in her youthful years. She always dresses as her mother dressed. The house at Saumur, a cold, sunless house, always gloomy and depressing, is the image of her life. She carefully accumulates her income, and perhaps she would seem parsimonious if her noble use of her riches did not give the lie to any such slander. Pious and charitable foundations, a hospital for the old and infirm and Christian schools for the children, a public library richly endowed, bear witness every year against the charges of avarice made by some uncharitable persons. The churches of Saumur owe some of their embellishments to her. Madame de Bonfons, who is jocosely called *mademoiselle*, generally inspires a feeling of religious respect. That noble heart, which beat only with the tenderest sentiments, was destined to be swayed by the scheming of selfish worldly interests. Gold imparted its cold complexion to that celestial life, and taught a woman who was all sentiment to be distrustful of the sentiments of others.

"You are the only one who loves me," she would say to Nanon.

This woman's hand soothes the secret wounds of families in every station. Eugénie is on her way to Heaven accompanied by a multitude of good

works. The grandeur of her mind lessens the effect of her petty education and the customs of her early life.

Such is the story of this woman, who is in the world but not of the world; who, although so constituted as nobly to perform the duties of wife and mother, has neither husband nor children nor family. For some days past there has been talk of a second marriage. The good people of Saumur are busying themselves concerning Eugénie and Monsieur le Marquis de Froidfond, whose family is beginning to surround the wealthy widow as the Cruchots formerly did. It is said that Nanon and Cornoiller are in the marquis's interest; but nothing is farther from the truth. Neither tall Nanon nor Cornoiller have intelligence enough to understand the corruption of society.

Paris, September, 1833.

A MASKED LOVE

NOTE

Balzac, who as an intimate friend enjoyed the hospitality of the Duchesse de Dino, *née* de Sainte-Aldegonde, decided to make her an absolutely unique gift. For this purpose he wrote a novel which he called L'AMOUR MASQUÉ. This original manuscript, which was never published, he had bound sumptuously by Lesort of Paris, and presented it to the duchess.

This characteristic Balzac story has remained hidden and a secret from the public ever since. Its authenticity is unquestioned for it has passed only from the possession of her son, Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, duc de Dino, into that of his friend Lucien Aubanel, the scholar and bibliophile, who has allowed it to be published.

I

It was midnight and all Paris was astir; everybody was excited and on pleasure bent; it was the Monday night before the end of the Carnival.

Léon de Préval, a young cavalry officer, had just entered the ball at the Opera. After wandering for more than an hour amid a throng that surged about him, now pressing closely on him, now receding, like the flow and ebb of waves, knowing nobody, quite innocent as to the meaning of the stupid remarks addressed to him by various women, choked with the dust, overcome by the heat, and made giddy by the unceasing screaming of so many black-clothed spectres, he questioned with himself if all this were pleasure, as he sought his way to the door, so as to leave the scene.

At this moment, two masked women, remarkably graceful of figure and elegantly habited, were descending the stairway from the hall; an unmasked man of handsome bearing escorted them. About them hummed a chorus of flattering remarks and a group of giddy fellows followed them urging gallant proposals.

Léon followed also, and the curious crowd increased at every step; then some people in character

masks, with their crowd of followers, met the party and the confusion became so great that the younger in appearance of the two ladies found herself suddenly separated from her companions. Looking anxiously about in quest of someone who could protect her, she chanced to see Léon, who had been an interested follower, and abruptly seizing his arm she anxiously exclaimed:

"Oh! escape from this, I beg of you, and help me to find my friends."

"Command me, beautiful mask; have no fear, but deign to accompany me and trust to my care."

Supporting her on one arm, and with the other thrusting aside those who blocked the way, he succeeded in leading her to the hall of the clock, where, after assisting her to a bench, he asked permission to procure some refreshments for her.

"No, stay here," she said, "I am quite well—in truth, I am ashamed to have given way to uncalled-for alarm."

"For my part, I bless that circumstance; for to it I owe the good fortune of being chosen for your protector."

"Yes, I confess you have done me a service, and I am grateful to you; I further entreat your countenance and aid in my search for my friends."

"What! you would leave me already? Were it but by way of reward, you should grant me a few moments."

"Very well, then, as a matter of reward, let us chat," she responded gaily.

They resumed their seats and conversed for some little time in lively and gallant humor. At length, the attractive mask again spoke of rejoining her companions.

"But, who are these friends?" asked Léon. A mother, a sister, a husband, it may be?"

"A husband! No, God forbid!"

"You are not married?"

"I am not now."

"A widow so early? How I pity you!"

"Who tells you that I am to be pitied? Are all husbands so good, all men so affectionate? Is there one who deserves to be regretted?"

"Ah! what an anathema! Happy, a thousand times happy, the man who will quicken in your heart juster and sweeter sentiments!"

"Toward a man! May Heaven from that preserve me!"

"What! would you eternally desolate the host of adorers who, doubtless—"

"I have none; I am from the other continent; I know no one."

"No one! Ah! lovely mask, then I enlist as the first, and shall always be the most devoted, the most faithful—"

"Faithful! gracious God! I will leave you if you persist in this strain."

"What! fidelity—"

"Fidelity is just a chain that is pretended to be worn merely to impose it on another. I am free, absolutely free, and I intend to be so always; no man shall make me falter in my determination."

"I, I am no longer free, that I feel, and I make no complaint; the chain shall be for me only; you cannot prevent my loving you, and hoping—"

"No, no, monsieur," she interrupted, "I will not be loved; not even be told of it, and, above all, that any man hopes."

"But, heartless mask, incomprehensible mask, what would you, then? What must be done to gain at least your pity?"

"Be neither a fool nor a deceiver; don't exaggerate what is hardly a feeling; don't believe that a few decidedly romantic phrases, a hypocritical sweetness, will induce a sensible woman to change her plans: submission, discretion, and patience are indispensable; wait until my ideas have some definiteness, till my mind is quite made up,—then, perhaps—"

"Then, perhaps? Charming mask, conclude, pronounce my fate—I will obey; silence, submission, patience,—I promise all."

As he spoke thus, Léon gazed intently, his eyes aflame with love and hope, at the obdurate mask, through which two large, black eyes, soft, yet brilliant, seemed to scrutinize him calmly and reflectively, then, unmoved by his impassioned tones, she replied, as if preoccupied:

"This ribbon, a token of valor, indicates that you are in the army?"

Amazed by the tranquil manner in which this question was put, Léon could voice no reply, but nodded affirmatively.

"Which regiment?"

"I am a captain in the Sixth Cavalry," he replied, somewhat testily.

"Perhaps you are on furlough? Does your family reside in this city?"

"No, my family, of good reputation and respected, but of little worldly possessions, live in a remote province. With my regiment, I have been here in the capital, like yourself, too, charming mask, but a short time; like you, again, I have no acquaintances here; once more like you, I am free, without bond or shackle, and chance led me to this place that I might lose heart, liberty, repose—"

"And to find here a cruel and ungrateful woman, is that not so? Those are the trite, high-sounding epithets. Well, for myself, more just to that chance, which is sometimes really helpful, I am disposed to think that it has done well by me in bringing you to me and that to it I shall be indebted to the only blessing now lacking in my life."

"Adorable unknown, would that I might fall at your feet and there prostrate swear that Léon de Préval, grateful and submissive, will do everything to merit so sweet a confession."

"A confession!" she exclaimed. "Ah! I have made a confession—What presumption men have!"

"How can one help somewhat flattering one's self with that which is so passionately desired? But, in my turn, may I not know the seductive being who takes delight in trifling with me? May I not lift this jealous mask that hides your features from me?"

"Which may perhaps be fairly good."

"Ah! if I could for a single moment see them, read therein—"

"Are you not able to read in my eyes?"

"They are bewitching, but were a sweet smile added—"

She interrupted him by rising and assuming a more serious and chilly tone answered:

"No, you will not see me again, you can never know me, or anything concerning me."

Léon paused, stupefied, then remarked:

"Was ever an inconceivable caprice like this? It is futile, madame, for me to urge you further. I perceive that you are very anxious to rejoin your companions. We must seek them—"

Without heeding his anger, she interrupted him, and asked with a pensive air:

"Léon de Préval is your name, is it not?" You are a captain in the Sixth Cavalry? Do you stay long in this city?"

"Eh! what matters it to you, unfeeling woman, since you will never see me again, since—"

"But how did you learn that I shall never see you again? How little will confuse the judgment of the wise of the world? I so desire to see you again that—"

"Eh! mon Dieu, my dear, what has become of you?" exclaimed a lady behind her. "For two hours we have been searching for you."

It was the lady in the pretty mask, with their escort. They joined one another and briefly told the happenings of the evening.

"I am exhausted with fatigue and ennui," said the lady who had just come up, "and I ask you to excuse us if we leave you."

"Gladly; I have nothing further to do here."

"What! so soon!" exclaimed Léon; "at least, then, allow me to escort you to your carriage?" His offer was accepted and they followed the other couple.

"Ah! forgive me," pursued Léon; "let us take up the delightful thread of our conversation, unfortunately interrupted; we were speaking of meeting again—when? where? how? Remember, in a moment, I shall have lost all, save the memory; will you not add to that a measure of hope?"

"Then monsieur will forget this great passion?"

"A truce to malice, I implore you. You are about to escape from me—How could I—?"

"But it is possible that I may return to the Mid-Lent ball."

"Three weeks, great gods! it will be three centuries."

"Yes, three weeks! or never!"

"In the meantime, either impatience or ennui will kill me."

"That would seriously derange my plans."

"Your plans?"

They had reached the door; a carriage drew up, but the light was insufficient to enable its color and the coat-of-arms to be distinguished. A negro held open the door.

"May I hope that you will at least pity my tortures?" Léon resumed.

"I believe I shall be greatly concerned about you."

On making this reply, she quickly stepped into the carriage and the horses darted off at lightning speed.

Léon stood gazing after the carriage that bore away from him his new conquest; then, not caring to return to the ball, he went home, his thoughts agitated, his heart deeply moved, musing upon his adventure and reproaching himself for not having ensured the means of pursuing it.

"What is she," he thought, "that bewitching yet odd creature? Her noble, discreet manners, and the pride, no the very authority, of her air forbid the suggestion even of her being a courtesan. But what is her design? Why arouse and destroy in turn my hopes? She has plans, she enquired as to details of my life; our meeting may be the cause of great happiness to her; yet I shall not see her again, I am nerved to know her! Perhaps her only purpose was to trifle with me. Ah! if I believed that, how richly I would be avenged! Upon whom? how? She may be unable to return to the ball; I have perhaps lost trace of her for ever. What a pity, for she is alluring, of that I am sure. What voluptuous softness in that elegant and supple form! What splendid eyes! How captivating her voice! What spirit, what charm in her conversation! Those three weeks will be eternity. I must employ them in her search, in finding her. Ah! let me try rather to find sleep."

But Léon could not sleep; and he arose very early to begin his search.

II

The first week was passed entirely in a ceaseless round of the streets, the stores, the theatres, the coffee-houses; following every woman whose form resembled that of his unknown, committing a thousand blunders, if not impertinences, with no other result than to convince himself of the futility of his efforts. By the end of the second week he had become discouraged, and by the third he seriously questioned whether he ought longer to serve as a mere plaything for a coquette who probably would keep out of his view, in order to take delight in his discomfiture. He was considering thus when a note was handed in at his door, containing these few words:

"M. de Préval will no doubt remember that he will be looked for on Thursday at the Opera ball, at one o'clock, under the clock."

As he read this note all his hopes were revived. Midnight of the appointed day had hardly sounded from the clock, when Léon took his seat beneath it, excited by a delicious eagerness and a lively curiosity.

A full hour passed; then the charming white domino passed by quickly, gave a slight sign and slackened her pace to allow her companions to get in advance; he joined her and as her round arm leaned upon Léon's, he tenderly pressed it. Rejoiced to see her, full of hope and happiness, he eloquently described all he had suffered,—his vain quests, his fears, his impatience;—she heard him tranquilly, but soon interrupted him.

"I have been more fortunate than you, then, for I have learned all that I needed to respecting yourself."

"Me!"

"Yes; you told me the exact truth, and I know, besides, that you enjoy the friendship of your companions-in-arms and the esteem of your superiors. In short, I am informed that you are fully equal to the obligations of an upright man, even toward a woman, and of religiously keeping pledges that may be exacted of you."

"That would be merely my duty; but let's speak of my good fortune. What! you have interested yourself in me? You deign, then, to take interest enough in my lot to desire that I should be worthy of your esteem, to enquire—"

"Yes, unquestionably, that was indispensable to my projects."

"Ah! those projects, I know them, I hope, sweet mask,—but conclude; banish every misgiving as to the happy mortal whose heart, already wholly engrossed by you, awaits a single word to yield itself to you for ever."

"I should be very sorry," she exclaimed, angrily.

Léon was silent for a few moments, then he responded:

"Ah! cease this cruel sport. Why torture me with these alternations of kindness and severity? To-night is the last ball, do not hope to escape me; I will follow your footsteps untiringly until I receive assurance that I shall see you again, and lay at your feet my vows and my heart and know the secret of your estimable plans."

"Oh! no, no, no; I must first be fully satisfied of your tractability and your discretion; I have some conditions to impose and their fulfilment must be pledged upon your word of honor attested by your signature."

"My word of honor! my signature!" responded Léon, somewhat astonished at the studied precautions, the solemn tone adopted for a pact agreed upon at the Opera ball.

He looked closely at his companion; she manifested embarrassment and was thoughtful; her breast visibly betrayed her emotion; he almost thought he could discern her blushes through her mask. She also watched him, with an air of indecision and preoccupation. Persuaded that he must press his suit more ardently, if he would bring her to a decision, Léon continued passionately:

"Charming but inexplicable being, I will, indeed, subscribe to everything; I renew the oath that I took at the first ball to be submissive, docile, discreet. I accept in advance all the

conditions you may impose, provided I secure in return the exquisite hope of seeing again, of possessing that—"

"That would be essential," she replied, pensively, rather as if answering her own thoughts than his words.

But Léon dwelt only on the words, which completed his infatuation.

"Ah! I am too happy," he exclaimed, "come my adorable unknown, fill my cup of joy to overflowing by escaping with me from this tiresome crowd; suffer me at least to tear off that odious mask, to hear your commands and to repeat under less restraint the vows and pledges of my love."

While speaking he drew her away, but she stopped suddenly, withdrew her arm from his, and resuming all the pride that seemed natural to her, said calmly, even coldly:

"You are strangely mistaken, Monsieur de Préval; your indiscreet outbursts, your empty protestations annoy and wound me. Believe me, I am not what you dare to assume, and I am entitled to more circumspect, more prudent, behavior on your part. I will, however, forgive this lapse, which I confess my singular conduct may have caused; but it is indispensable that you should submit to all that I shall exact: to-morrow you shall hear from me and learn those conditions; till then,—patience and resignation."

As she concluded she rushed amid the crowd to escape him, but he promptly followed her.

"No, I will not leave you!" he exclaimed; "you shall not abandon me thus, heartless woman; you inflame my soul and stir my imagination only to leave me—"

"Conduct me to my carriage," she said imperiously.

He seized the hand she extended and earnestly renewed his reproaches and entreaties, but she vouchsafed no reply.

The faithful negro was at the door; the unknown quickly entered the carriage, saying to Léon: "To-morrow! rely on my promise."

"Permit me at least to accompany you," he said, pausing in the act of putting his foot on the step.

"Shut the door, and drive away," she imperatively commanded.

The order was instantly obeyed, and Léon once more saw his hopes vanish with her who had created them.

III

It is easy to conceive with what impatience Léon awaited the morrow. Many times during the day he returned to his domicile in the hope of finding a letter there. With what joy he finally received it! But great was his astonishment to read the following:

"M. de Préval appeared yesterday most eagerly to desire again to see the lady in the white domino, with whom he conversed at the Opera ball; he promised to submit to everything that might be demanded of him.

"Here are the conditions upon which he may hope to gain what he so persistently pursued.

"1.—M. de Préval will find at his house to-morrow at midnight a confidential man, whom he has already seen, and who will be there with a hackney-carriage to take him to his destination; but M. de Préval must consent to be blindfolded.

"2.—He will not put any questions to his guide, or attempt to bribe him (though this would be useless), and will allow himself to be conducted quietly.

"3.—He must expressly engage not to make outcry or create scandal, not to object to the darkness, and not to require the lady with whom he

shall find himself to break the silence which she has imposed.

"4.—When his guide shall return to conduct him to his home, he will consent to be led back to the carriage and to his home under the same precautions; and, without making futile enquiries to discover what is required of him, will patiently await the enlightenment that is promised to him, under oath.

"5.—If M. de Préval assents to these conditions he will write at the bottom of this page that he accepts them and attest his acceptance by his signature and place this paper in an envelope at his door, whence it will be taken."

After reading this strange document Léon remained for some time motionless, wonderstruck, a prey to a multitude of reflections and confused by a thousand varying sentiments.

How could the exceedingly grave precautions of this odd pact be reconciled with the enlightenment pledged? How could the noble, honorable, and reserved behavior of this unknown be squared with this procedure?

Again and again he reflected that it would be as foolish as imprudent to sign such a proposition, to risk himself in such an improbable adventure. Yet he could not escape the image of the lovely mask, and his memory recalled the spirited conversations at the ball, and the contrast of so much haughtiness with so much weakness, the piquant situation, the lively curiosity aroused, the amour-propre at

stake,—all conspired to form an irresistible allurement. For a moment, he thought he might expose himself to danger in permitting himself to be thus led by an unknown man to an unknown place, bound by his word of honor, exposed to all risks. But this very danger was only an attraction the more.

"No, I will not retreat!" he exclaimed; "one folly may well be risked in the hope of the delicious prize offered to me."

So, seizing a pen, the wise Cato wrote like a mere giddy-pate:

"I accept all the conditions you exact, and I pledge myself, on my word of honor, to fulfil them scrupulously. I ask permission but to wear my sword.

"LÉON DE PRÉVAL."

The packet was taken away in the evening, and the following morning he received another note containing the few words:

"The sword is permitted; but M. de Préval need have no fear for his honor or safety."

Never was a day so long. Fully dressed, Léon had been striding to and fro in his room for two hours when the sound of a carriage stopping at his door stirred within him the keenest excitement. He grasped his sword, ran hurriedly down the stairs, and found the negro awaiting him. He had hardly taken his seat in the carriage before his guide, in his wretched patois, begged respectfully to be permitted to blindfold Léon. This was done without resistance,

and then the carriage rolled along for some time before the negro ordered it stopped. Assisting Léon to alight he walked beside him for about a hundred paces further on in the street and then they quickly entered a house. After ascending several steps, Léon became aware that he was passing through some extensive apartments, after leaving which a chamber perfumed with the choicest odors was entered. At this moment, the bandage was removed from Léon's eyes and gazing around curiously he found he was in a darkened room, at the end of which, through an open door, he could distinguish an elegant boudoir dimly lighted by an alabaster lamp.

The negro stood beside him, holding a dark lantern in one hand, and pointing with the other to the boudoir he uttered in a low voice: "Honor and silence!" and disappeared abruptly.

Léon adjusted his sword and rushed forward. A woman—his unknown herself, in a simple negligé, her face veiled, rested on a sofa in a half-recumbent posture.

"How happy I am!" he exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet. "But how is this? Still you hide your features from me. Pardon me, no more mystery! No more veils!" As he spoke, he raised his hand impatiently; it was not checked, but the lamp was suddenly extinguished.

The night had well advanced when a slight sound was heard in the apartment; a secret door swung

open,—the unknown vanished; Léon was alone. But the negro entered at once and in a respectful tone asked Léon to resume the bandage over his eyes and to follow him.

"No, I will not depart from this spot," he angrily replied, "until I have seen that adorable woman,—until I have obtained—"

A woman's voice interrupted him, close by him it uttered the words: "Honor and silence!"

Léon rushed to the spot at which the unknown had disappeared, but found only the wall; he groped around and felt a small door, securely fastened, through which he caught glimpse of a light that moved away and finally vanished.

"Cruel woman," he said in a low tone, not daring to speak aloud, "stay a moment—half a word—"

"Honor and silence!" said the negro in a louder tone.

"Yes, honor binds me in chains," replied Léon, desolately; "I have promised—I submit—I hope the promise made to me will be kept as faithfully as I keep mine."

The bandage was replaced; Léon accompanied his guide and reëntered the carriage. He soon reached home where, abandoning himself to his poignant regrets, he almost doubted whether his experience was other than a dream, and finally fell asleep to continue it.

IV

Who could picture Léon's anxiety, his torture when days, one week, two, and three weeks had passed without bringing him tidings of his unknown, without her deigning to take any means to quiet his impatience. All his meditations were sufferings.

"What!" he thought, "did they engage my loyalty, my honor, only to indulge the momentary caprice of a woman without principles or morals? But no, I am an ingrate. I have felt her heart throb under the quickening of fear. O my lovely mistress! Why do you lift me to the crown of joy only to dash me down immediately?"

Léon was interrupted in this apostrophe to his lovely mysterious one by a letter, whose arrival seemed exactly timed to answer his musings. He recognized the writing that had traced the conditions of the pact, and quivering with joy he opened it and read:

"What illusions I am about to shatter! What a pleasing hope is at the point of being blotted out! What prestige to fade! You deem yourself the victor, when it is you who are to be prevailed over; your amour-propre must be flattered by exercising an

irresistible domination over a weak woman; yet it is her will only that you obey; in short, you doubtless impatiently await the moment when you will see her, know her, to establish your dominion by new transports on your side, fresh weaknesses on hers—that moment will never arrive; all is ended between her and you.

"Nevertheless, your loyalty and the delicacy of your conduct merit some recognition on my part; I cannot better testify it than by confiding to you those plans which your curiosity so strongly pressed you to learn, than by communicating to you the motives of conduct that must seem to you most strange and even imprudent, but of which, thanks to you, I have no fear that I shall have cause to repent.

"An ill-mated marriage that brought me only misery, mortification, injustice, and violence, has created in me an unconquerable aversion to that fateful bond, whose burden falls wholly on the weaker and upholds force and sanctions injustice. Finding myself rich, free, and entirely my own mistress at twenty-five, I vowed to remain so always; but I very soon became conscious that I had purchased my independence at the cost of the sweetest of most natural sentiments; I looked about but failed to discover a single being who required my care, my affection, who could love me and declare that love. My regret at not being a mother ceaselessly beset me and increased to the point of being a real grief. Born beneath a burning sun, my thoughts were eager and my soul was ardent. In short, what shall I say?

I conceived the uncommon project of enjoying the joy of motherhood, at least, without taking upon myself the bondage I detest. Do not, however, think me a free-lover, or that I regard as mere prejudices the wholesome laws of society; no, I respect them, and if for once I could contravene them, it was only once, and the peculiar circumstances furnish me with the means of preserving my reputation, at least, and the proprieties.

"That plan, timidly entertained at first, continued to increase its hold on my mind and I meditated upon it; I confess that its romantic aspect probably gave it added charm—it became a passion. You know how I contrived to carry it out and that to you I owe the one joy that my life lacked. At first, I decided to leave you in entire ignorance, complete forgetfulness, but later I concluded that you ought to be informed. Besides, if my hopes are realized, I may die before the object of all my cares is able to care for itself; I shall leave to that object my entire fortune, but I think I should fail to fulfil my duty if I deprived it of its natural guardian.

"Remember, then, that wherever you may be called by duty, you will at the fitting time receive a ring section, divided lengthwise, on which will be engraved the date of the birth,—the setting will be a diamond, if a son, an emerald, if a daughter. The corresponding section of this ring will be given to the child, if it lose me, with the instructions needed for finding you; on its being presented to you, if it match the half you possess, that will be proof of its right to

your protection, and my esteem for you convinces me that such protection will not be claimed in vain.

"Adieu, monsieur; adieu, Léon; for ever adieu! Spare yourself all effort to discover me, you would but waste your labor, for I am going away in a few days. Forget the fantastic creature unknown to you, whom you must never know; be happy, I desire it, and I can know that my heart will rejoice."

"Happy!" exclaimed Léon, angrily flinging the letter as far from him as he could; "be happy, when she calmly informs me I must not see her again, when her insulting confidence but apprizes me of the true value of what I have lost, and then only to deprive me of it for ever! But she need not think she will evade me; she is mine; she bound that knot herself. Was it only to untie it thus?—Yes, I will follow her everywhere; and at the same time demand my rights. She cannot deprive me of them—Alas!" he continued, after a moment's reflection, "I forget that she is going away. Probably she will return to her own country and wide seas will separate us. Ah! unfortunate that I am! Why did I go to the ball? Why so mad as to accept those perfidious obligations?"

The sudden blasting of his enthralling hopes so grievously affected Léon that he was ill for several days. As soon as he was able to leave the house, he commenced anew his quest, more eagerly than previously, but being a stranger in the capital he was but ill-equipped to succeed and he soon lapsed into a

condition of passive regret, the very worst of ills; his disposition even acquired a tinge of melancholy, and this became habitual.

His honorable family training had imbued him with proper principles, hence he had never indulged in the licentious life of the camp, and the study of his profession and fatiguing and victorious campaigns had afforded him but little opportunity to form any lasting liaison. Though capable of strong attachment he had never loved, so this first impression was the deeper; and now when chance presented to him a lovely woman whom the mystery that surrounded her made more seductive, she vanished like a shadow; perhaps he would soon be a father, and he would never clasp to his heart the child of his love; bound by the sweetest and strongest ties to objects that he could figure only in his imagination, he might never know them.

Such were the thoughts that incessantly plagued him; yet, by degrees, after perusing and re-perusing the letter, he thought he discovered some gleams of promise. All hope of discovering his unknown had not gone; would not the enigmatic ring that was promised him, which should announce the most fondly-hoped for event, be a sort of correspondence? In short, as so much care was to be taken to ensure the child's finding its father, it was clear that the fate of the latter must be kept in mind, and the knowledge that his unseen was still occupied with his welfare engrossed his thoughts and somewhat comforted him.

But a fresh trouble awaited him. His regiment was ordered to leave for garrison duty in a little town in the north of France, and, compelled to accompany it, Léon was once more plunged into despair. On leaving Paris, he abandoned all hope of discovering a trace of her whom he sought, while he, himself, buried in the heart of a province might be forgotten; the message he so impatiently awaited would perhaps not be sent to him there. He must leave, however, and the prospect of a sojourn in a small town bereft of society, with no other diversion than solitary promenades, did not serve to brighten the gloom of Léon's thoughts.

V

Meanwhile, constantly brooding over his sorrow in his miserable exile, he restlessly computed the months that must pass before he could receive the promised intelligence. His unknown was likewise in seclusion, but on a fine estate situated on the highway from Tours to Bordeaux, where, with all the earnestness of a passionate mind, she wholly abandoned herself to the delicious hopes she had created. All was novel to her, everything in her unfettered situation enchanted her.

Born in Martinique and brought up surrounded by slaves, the young Elinor, at sixteen, knew no other restraint than the indulgent control of her parents; the strict rules of society had never put their wholesome yoke upon her. It was then that her beauty aroused the desire of M. de Roselis, the richest colonist in the island. He sued for her hand, and, dazzled by the fame of his riches, the over-ambitious family at once gave assent.

M. de Roselis was forty and handsome, but his character was as vile as it was contemptible. Formerly, he had been the steward of the establishment that he now owned, and, never having been away from it, he had acquired the habit of ruling as a

tyrant and as a result had contracted all the vices which isolation and limitless power almost invariably engender. Suspicious, violent, lacking principle and morality, his vanity, momentarily flattered by winning the hand of the loveliest daughter of the colony, soon gave place to a despicable jealousy, which mastered his sentiments toward her, and which he indulged with all the cruelty of a despotic nature.

Elinor, secluded among her female slaves, whose disposal she could not ordain, and some of whom were her rivals, endured the most ignoble treatment; her proud and sensitive nature bitterly resented this, and she vowed that henceforward she would bear toward all men the scorn and hatred so justly due to the one man whom she had been able to judge.

Her parents died of grief caused by the sacrifice of their only daughter, and her husband, worn out by a life whose pleasures he had wholly exhausted, was making preparations to journey to France, whither he had remitted funds for the purchase of an estate, when death smote him amid the revels of a debauched coterie.

The lovely Elinor de Roselis thus suddenly found herself, at twenty-five, the richest and most independent widow in the colony, but disgusted with a country in which she had known nothing but sorrow, she resolved to carry out her husband's plan and to settle in France. A childhood friend, Madame de Gernancé, whose marriage had been a felicitous one, having also decided to remove to the same country with her family and fortune, they chartered a vessel

and embarked their possessions; then after renewing her vow, kneeling at the tomb of her parents, that she would never commit the control of her life into the hands of any man, Madame de Roselis sailed, her mind busy with innumerable projects and cherishing a thousand hopes.

During the earlier years of her unhappy union, Madame de Roselis had bitterly regretted not being a mother, and this sorrow had been consoled only by the thought that she might have witnessed in her child the heritage of those vicious qualities that had inflicted on her prolonged and great misery.

This sorrow became more acute than ever, even during the first experiences of freedom, and now, alone, without family or tie, about to settle in a foreign land where she had not an acquaintance, she more than before realized the fact that her present unfettered position was not all that constituted happiness and that some other interest in life was essential to one's attachment to it. The constant presence of her friend's children during the voyage led all her thoughts toward this subject, and while enjoying their caresses and sharing in their pastimes, she received the first suggestion of the fantastic plan of which we have seen the realization. The leisure afforded by a long voyage gave her ample time to elaborate the plan so as to obviate the serious mischances that might befall. At last, growing ever more alluring as she developed her plan in imagination, it became the wholly dominant subject of her thought when she landed at Bordeaux.

After only a brief stay in that city, she accompanied Monsieur and Madame de Gernancé to Paris, where they were to pass the winter. We know with what heedlessness and success she carried out her madcap enterprise, and how favoring chance led her to find in Léon de Préval an honesty and a stability of character competent to protect her from the hazardous possibilities to which she exposed herself.

Unwilling to confide in anyone but her faithful black, she entrusted to him, in the interval before the last ball, the task of renting a small house in a remote suburb, which she then arranged in such a way as her plan required. A secret spring with which the lamp could be extinguished at will; hidden passages that would facilitate her escape—all was the work of a well-reasoned foresight applied to an undertaking which could not itself be so qualified.

As she resided in the same house as her companions of the voyage, she was obliged to lead them off the trail, so she advised them in advance that she would set out for her estate the morning following Mid-Lent. On that day, in spite of her friends' entreaties, she bade them adieu, and departed with the negro as her only companion, for the other domestics had been sent ahead some hours before. But her journey extended only to the small house she had rented, and all succeeded as she desired.

After that rendezvous so carefully planned, she remained for a time secluded within the house; she wrote Léon from there the letter that made

him so desolate; a few days thereafter she left for Touraine.

Her first care on her arrival was to spread the report that her husband, already sick when he embarked, had died on the voyage, and this report was strengthened by her appearing in mourning garments. Soon, she permitted it to leak out that she entertained a hope that she would possess a tardy pledge of her marriage; some months later the hope became a certainty to all observers and toward the close of autumn Madame de Roselis gave birth to a daughter who was cared for in the château.

With what transports she clasped this child to her bosom, this craved-for child, who was her sole joy in life and who was to concentrate all its mother's tenderest sentiments.

"You will love me," she said, "you will be grateful for all the cares and the tenderness I will lavish on you; I shall live for you alone, and shall not be tormented with the dread of suffering neglect and outrage as the reward of my devotion. There is at least one being in the world to whom I am bound by the sweetest and firmest ties, and whose innocent caresses and childish joys will, I hope, be all-satisfying to my happiness."

It was only natural that the transports of the new delight should recall to mind him to whom she was indebted therefor; and thinking of the happiness that Léon would know if he could see this child, she remembered her promise to notify him of the date of its birth.

The negro was sent to Paris to order the ring that had been promised to Léon. He was instructed to enquire at the War Office what town the regiment was quartered in, and to set out thither without any delay, post haste, to bear this last message to Léon. He was to deliver it personally and to be especially careful to withdraw at once so that M. de Préval could not detain him to ask a single question. The negro accomplished his task intelligently and exactly.

VI

When November had come, Léon was singularly perturbed. One morning he was returning from drill melancholy and pensive, when just as he was about to enter his quarters, he heard the clatter of horse hoofs behind him. Turning his head he recognized the negro and cried out with surprise and joy; the black accosted him and without dismounting said:

"Here is what I was ordered to deliver to you," at the same time handing him a sealed box; then putting spurs to his horse he disappeared forthwith. Léon, dumbfounded, stood gazing after him and it was only when his eyes once more rested on the box that he was sure that the sudden disappearance was other than the vision of a disturbed mind.

He impatiently opened the box in which he found only the half of a gold ring, divided like an *alliance,* upon which was engraved: 22 November, 18. . ; a very fine emerald was the setting.

"It is a girl! I am a father!" Léon exclaimed. But no letter, not even a word! She still trifles with me. All is probably over! I shall never again hear her spoken of. What then is this inconceivable creature who thus disposes my destiny, holds my

future in leash? Who, though always invisible, pursues me even to the heart of this province, and at her pleasure alternately seeks and abandons me? Miserable ball! Fateful rendezvous!" Again and again, in a hundred ways, his troubled mind wrestled with these reflections, but without a satisfactory result.

In this condition a full year sped. As spring again approached, rumors of war circulated; an expedition to Spain was discussed, and soldiers, dreaming of promotion and glory, revelled in the prospect of escaping from inactivity.

Léon, wearied by his reminiscences and the lack of busy employment which served only to nourish them, eagerly awaited the signal of war. One day to his intense astonishment he received a despatch from the Minister of War naming him aide-de-camp to General X . . . and ordering him to report forthwith to that superior officer in Paris.

As Léon did not enjoy the acquaintance of the general and did not know that he had any influential person about that officer, he could not imagine who had brought about this nomination; but he reflected that everything that had happened to him for some time past had been extraordinary. This event filled him with pleasure and hope. Perhaps his unknown had played a part in this latest happening. In that case, it would open a way to learn her name and her residence. Anyhow, he was returning to Paris, and, though his stay there would be very brief, some favoring chance might aid him in his search. On his

arrival there he was cordially received by the general, installed in his home, and accorded a place at his table.

At first, he had very little opportunity to devote himself to plans that had hitherto proved fruitless, for the multiplicity of his duties fully employed his time; but after a little while, thanks to the consideration of the general, with whom he had become almost a favorite, he was emboldened to ask the name of the person to whom he was indebted for the honorable position he held. The general informed him that the recommendation of M. de B . . . . , in charge of the personnel of the war, and the recollection of Léon's distinguished conduct in previous campaigns had influenced him in his application for Léon's appointment as aide-de-camp.

"That reminds me," he went on, "that it would be proper for you to pay him a visit and thank him: I expect to go there one of these evenings, and if you wish, I will take you."

Although disappointed in his hope, Léon accepted gratefully, and a few days later the general took him in his carriage to M. de B . . . . 's house.

A goodly number had already gathered in the salon and Madame de B . . . . , after arranging some games, had resumed her place at the hearth, surrounded by a little group of men and women in animated conversation, when Léon was presented to her. But it was in vain that he sought the much-desired information from her, for, after a few polite remarks, Madame de B . . . . led the conversation back into the general

channel and begged one of the gentlemen to resume an anecdote that had been interrupted. So Léon's hopes were frustrated and he found himself a listener, like the others.

Stories lively and anecdotes strange followed each other for some time. Madame de B . . . . , careful to afford an opportunity to each guest in turn to distinguish himself, finally turned to Léon with a smile and asked him if he had not had some adventure in the course of his camp life and its vicissitudes that merited recital. Léon's mind, possessed of his own adventure, told that as the experience of an officer of his regiment, nor did it lose in interest because of his complete absorption in his subject.

When he had concluded, a spirited discussion took place concerning the strange whim of independence of the lady. The inexcusable imprudence that could impel a woman to imperil herself so recklessly was severely condemned by the ladies, who also blamed the sacrifice of duty to an unseemly love of freedom. The men decided that her conduct bespoke character, imagination, that she had carried through her romance with spirit and determination, and that she must be a charming woman. Each of them wished that he had been in the officer's place and vowed that he would not have permitted himself to be toyed with, and that no pledge would have barred him from discovering and conquering the lovely fugitive.

"In truth," tartly remarked a lady of mature years, "overmuch scruple was not called for in dealing with one who possessed so little self-respect."

"I admit that it is out of the question to try to justify her conduct," continued a very pretty woman, seated at the corner of the chimney-piece, "but it may well be assumed that powerful and secret causes inspired that unconquerable aversion to a second bondage; the passion for motherhood suffices to explain the rest, and which among us, while caressing the babe that smiles at her, could not in her heart find some excuse for a fault born of that sentiment?"

"At any rate, you will acknowledge that she inflicted a bitter wound on that poor officer?"

"What very great harm has she done him?" asked the pretty lady, in a trivial manner.

"What harm?" exclaimed Léon, fervidly, "is it nothing that he should be ceaselessly haunted with the memory of a beautiful woman, whose graces and intellect have filled his being with love, to possess whom was a delirium of joy; and who obstinately keeps out of his sight and beyond his affection? who seems to have set his heart aflame only to abandon him to his grief, and maintains only such relations with him as will feed desires that can never be satisfied? He is a husband, he is a father, yet never, perhaps, will he know the objects of the most natural affection; he is ignorant of the place of their dwelling, while he himself is pursued and discovered, subjected to an unseen surveillance; he is controlled; on him are laid duties; and, more unfortunate than the lowest in the social scale, he will not receive the reward of that domestic happiness which is the right of all, save him."

"Come, admit there is a little exaggeration in all that; besides, why does'nt he marry?"

"How could he, madame? Suppose that time should efface the too-deep impression of a transient happiness, would he still belong to himself? So long as she he loves is free, can he abandon his freedom? Ah! if that strange aversion to a natural bond should die out, if it were possible one day to obtain the long-sought hand, how could he find consolation if he had pledged his own?"

"There is at least much delicacy in the sentiments you attribute to him," replied the lady, looking at Léon with an expression of great tenderness and solicitude, which touched him, and he continued still more fervently:

"And the ring divided between the child and him; is not that a link that will hold him always? In whatever case he may be, his affection and paternal care may be claimed. He is wholly possessed, yet he possesses nothing! And as the finishing touch to this unique complication, he can only hope to know his child in losing its mother! The first glimpse of that cherished being will convey the knowledge that one still more dear is no more; and that the happiness of a father's place is purchased at the cost of a husband's."

Léon's voice faltered as he spoke the closing words and his tears seemed ready to gush forth.

"Upon my honor, my dear Préval," said the general, smiling, "you have painted so pathetic a picture of the state of this young man that one might

easily be tempted to believe that it is done from nature."

Madame de B . . . . , observing Léon's embarrassment and emotion, hastily changed the topic. Léon remained standing by the chimney-piece near the pretty lady. After a moment's silence, she said in a low tone:

"You have deeply interested me in your friend, monsieur; it would be impossible to draw a more eloquent picture of his sentiments."

"At least, madame, it is an absolutely true one; but the coming campaign will be a powerful means for diverting his melancholy, and the hope of a glorious end to a life that no longer presents inviting prospects—"

"What do you say, monsieur?" interrupted the pretty lady; "if you have any influence over him, you should exert it to turn him from that terrible thought, pressing it upon him that it is his duty to preserve his life for that child."

"Why should he acknowledge duties that bring no recompense? By what law must he devote his life to those who have empoisoned it?—But a bullet," he added with a melancholy smile, "a bullet will settle many matters."

At that moment, the general called to him; adieus were exchanged and wishes expressed that glory might be theirs and a safe return.

"That is an extremely interesting young man," said Madame de B . . . . , as soon as they had left, "a splendid face, a lovely soul; it would be a great loss, indeed, if he were killed in Spain."

VII

From that moment, Madame de Roselis,—for it has doubtless been surmised that it was she,—was unable to regain the peaceful self-content, the proud indifference which she had flattered herself she would always command. She comprehended the degree and the peril of her indiscretion by the severity of the opinions expressed by the women; while the trifling, easy-going comments of the men enabled her to appreciate her obligation to Léon for the unusual delicacy of his conduct.

This reflection increased her esteem for him, and the mere idea that she was the cause of the misery of a man who adored her, whom she could not help liking, the combination of peril and glory, so powerful a factor in ruling the heart of woman, and finally solicitude, the nourishment of love and memory,—all coöperated to quicken entirely novel sentiments in her heart. Beset with the desire to see her daughter and to regain her solitude, her only object now was to hasten her departure.

In the course of her farewell visit to Madame de B . . . . , she learned that General X . . . and his agreeable aide-de-camp were already on their way to Spain, where hostilities had opened. Her heart was

sore, so her visit was brief; a painful eagerness, as it were, urged her to get home to hurry forward the preparations for the journey.

How different was now the state of her mind from what it was at the beginning of winter, when, yielding to the entreaties of Madame de Gernancé, she decided to spend that season in Paris.

Happy, unruffled, in the full pride of life, and dreaming only of pleasure projects,—such was Madame de Roselis then, and it is easy to imagine with what welcome a lovely and wealthy widow would be received in society, where good fortune is held in such high regard. The home of Madame de B . . . . was one of those to which Elinor was introduced; M. de Gernancé was intimately associated with the husband of this lady, and when the first rumors of war were heard, Elinor seized the opportunity afforded by this connection to secure a less hazardous and more distinguished position for Léon. She led M. de Gernancé to suppose that the young man's family had recommended him to her good offices, and she desired only that she should not be known in the matter. Her effort was successful, her wishes were fulfilled. Then followed that chance meeting which suddenly changed her life.

Madame de Roselis took her way back to Touraine anxious at heart and moody, and reproaching herself for a folly the results of which she could not foresee. Her vivid imagination, however, pictured the most frightful circumstances as certain to happen and the contemplation of the dreadful scenes that she seemed

to delight in creating in advance assuredly softened her heart. The negro remained in Paris, charged with the duty of communicating to her the details of the news from Spain, in which she had become keenly interested.

When she saw her daughter again, she felt that she had become still more dear to her; she was suddenly impressed with a resemblance that she had not heretofore noticed, and new kisses, more passionate than before, followed this discovery.

More secluded than ever, Madame de Roselis passed the summer in the delicious occupation of marking the progress made by this beloved child; each month developed an added charm and a growth in intelligence. Elinor was delighted; yet she often longed for one near her who might share the joys of her maternal enthusiasm.

"It is sad, nevertheless," she thought, "not to have someone to whom I can tell my joy, one who feels it as I do—Ah! doubtless," she continued, smothering by force of pride a sigh, "it is only a father who could find as much delight in these infant ways—And, after that, who can tell whether that lofty tyrant might not oppose me in her education, whether his extreme severity—Ah! Léon would not be a tyrant —His look is gentle, his smile is loving—He would be a good father." Then she thought that he was far away, exposed to all the perils of war, that he was anxious to die, that he was already dead, perhaps.

Then Madame de Roselis wrote for news from Spain, and not until she learned that M. de Préval

was in a certain town and well did she regain her tranquillity and haughtiness.

Toward winter, her friends, who could not imagine what attraction held her so long in her retreat, wrote her a pressing invitation to join them. Being unable to make up her mind to leave her little Léonie, of whom she became fonder each day, and not yet daring to make known to Madame de Gernancé the existence of this child, she postponed her departure under various pretexts.

It was not until January had partly passed that she finally started for Paris. But the brilliant festivities, the charming society, which had captivated her the year before, had now no allurement for her; all seemed tiresome, insipid; she returned from them worn out, discontented, feeling herself to be alone; and it began to enter her mind that the independence which she had prized as her sovereign possession might be too dearly purchased at the price of an empty heart and the ennui that is its inseparable companion.

Bored by the undesirable attentions paid her by a crowd of giddy-pates whose hopes were stimulated by her position, she bethought herself that it might perhaps be far better to be bound to one in order to be rid of others; that in society an agreeable and pretty woman needs a protector in order to be sure of respect; and, without being conscious of the fact, she realized that the memory of Léon was growing less indifferent to her.

Suddenly, a rumor was in the air of a bloody engagement having been fought in Spain. Full of anxiety and strange presentiments, Elinor hurried off

to the home of Madame de B . . . . She found the conversation there was the subject that was uppermost in her mind; but deep indeed was her emotion, when, naming several officers who had been killed, Madame de B . . . . said to her:

"You remember, madame, that agreeable aide-de-camp of General X . . . who told us that odd story? Well, he has been missing ever since the battle; he cannot be found, either among the living or the dead."

Elinor's only response was a cry of surprise; fortunately for her, a protracted discussion of this matter took place. After listening to one conjecture after another, each more hopeless than the other, Madame de Roselis abruptly left, feeling, at last, in spite of her prejudices, that a man had the power to disturb her happiness and influence her life.

For nearly a month longer she remained in Paris, always hoping to get positive news; but nothing transpiring to throw light on the fate of Léon, she resolved to return to Touraine. Madame de Gernancé surprised at her melancholy, anxious about her health, and feeling that solitude would intensify these conditions, opposed her purpose to return, but in vain. So Elinor departed with her burden of melancholy and grief. The sight of her daughter served but to intensify it.

"She has only me," she thought, "he who might take my place one day is, perhaps, no longer alive."

Every courier was impatiently awaited, but for nearly two months no word had been received as to the fate of Léon.

VIII

One evening she was seated at the end of the park, enjoying the play of her little Léonie and dreaming of him whose face she recalled, when she heard the confused voices of her servants, who were seeking her.

"Madame," said one of them, "should be in the park with her daughter."

"Her daughter," exclaimed a stranger, in surprise; but Elinor at once recognized the voice of Madame de Gernancé, who at that moment came in sight, and the two friends ran to meet and embrace each other.

"My dear Elinor," affectionately exclaimed Madame de Gernancé, "I could no longer endure my anxiety; your letters have become so rare and so brief, and, as I have seen, so steeped in melancholy, that I determined to judge for myself of your condition; I am here for a short time to share and, if I can, enliven your solitude."

While her friend was gratefully expressing her appreciation of this touching evidence of friendship, Madame de Gernancé attentively watched, with surprise and curiosity, the child whom she noticed was treated by the domestics as the daughter of the house, and who in her childish prattle frequently called to her mother.

When they had come into the house, Madame de Roselis said with a smile:

"I observe your surprise and I divine your curiosity—Yes, my dear, I have kept from you a secret, one that I have not dared to reveal to you; but tomorrow, nevertheless, you shall learn everything, and the story will inform you at the same time of the source of my melancholy."

Notwithstanding the fatigue of the journey, Madame de Gernancé hardly slept that night, so impatient was she to know the mystery, which she was quite unable to fathom. She rose early next morning and was the first to seek Elinor; the two at once went into the park so that they might converse with freedom. Madame de Roselis walked in silence beside her friend, greatly embarrassed concerning the disclosure she was about to make.

"The time is passed, my dear," she began at length, hesitatingly, "for keeping from you a secret that I always wished to impart to you, and which I have delayed to do only because I was sure that you would not approve of my behavior.—However, I must tell it to you—that child who excited your curiosity yesterday—is my daughter—I longed to be a mother, but I could not bear a second time that yoke whose terrible weight I have known—"

Madame de Gernancé could not repress an exclamation of surprise; but, without giving her time to speak, Elinor continued the story of the unseemly plan that she had formed in the course of the ocean trip and of the means by which she had carried it out.

Finally, she came to the birth of her daughter, when her friend brusquely interrupted her.

"What care, what prudence," she exclaimed, "to carry out a mad purpose! How you have imperilled yourself!—To risk your reputation in that manner, your very existence in society! For an imperfect happiness that is concealed, that connot be manifested! To this the excess of an insensate prejudice brought you! Carried away by your imagination, you have ardently embraced a chimera, which has led you to choose the deplorable facility of satisfying a caprice rather than the true blessings of life. Ah! believe me, you should as speedily as possible make overtures to the father of that sweet child; do not deprive her longer of her best friend, her natural protector; neither deprive yourself of the joys of a natural love, of the sweetest of all intimacies."

"Ah! that is no longer in my power," exclaimed Madame de Roselis; "hear how I am punished for the faults for which you so severely condemn me." Then she recalled to her that aide-de-camp who had been so much talked about at Madame de B . . . . 's and who was still lamented there.

"What! he!" exclaimed Madame de Gernancé. "What have you done, Elinor? How I pity you! You see now that this indiscretion has destroyed the peace of your heart, the tranquillity of your best years, and, as a just punishment, it is out of your power now to repair the injury. So, a wife without being a spouse, a mother without daring to assume

the title, your life will be spent in blushing for the most natural of sentiments, the most honorable; and you so lovely, so brilliant, richly dowered by nature and fortune,—you have robbed yourself of happiness enjoyed by the women in the lowest walks of life, the delicious happiness of possessing one's husband and one's child. But even that is not all. I read your heart; your pride will strive in vain to hide it from others and from yourself.—That heart is no longer yours; it loves, it is bestowed."

At these words, Madame de Roselis hid her face with her hands; tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Dear Elinor," continued Madame de Gernancé, in a gentle tone, at the same time drawing near her and folding her arms about her: "Ah! your tears warn me that I am too much your friend to be your judge. Put an end to this abandonment to sorrows that are perhaps not beyond relief; let us hope that Léon is still alive, and that all may be remedied."

At these words, Elinor ceased weeping, and haughtily exclaimed:

"Remedied! no my dear, I do not believe that I could consent so easily to what you style a remedy. I have erred, it is true, but it was weakness; it was of my own will and done after much rumination upon the sufferings I have endured. I mourn the fate of an interesting man, certainly, who has been distressed through me and whose life I may have shortened; I shall not be happy unless I learn that he still lives—but to renounce my freedom, to allow it to

be thought by this conversion that I have been weak or that I am inconsistent,—to that I will never consent."

Madame de Gernancé clearly saw that the time had not arrived to attack boldly the prejudices and the pride of her friend, but from this moment Léon was the regular subject of their conversations, and Elinor in constantly speaking about him unconsciously stimulated the inclination of her heart toward him. On her side, Madame de Gernancé drew the alluring picture of her own happiness, assuring her friend that such might be hers also. Elinor at times seemed impressionable, she wavered, and smiled at the advice of her friend. At other times, allured by her chimera of freedom, she was annoyed at the very thought of abandoning the plan for which she had already made such heavy sacrifice. The two friends were in unison, however, as to their hopes and prayers for the return of Léon.

One day Elinor and Madame de Gernancé were conversing on their familiar subject, when they were told that the servant of a traveller who was passing the end of the avenue was pleading piteously for aid to his sick and suffering master, who had swooned in his carriage. Madame de Roselis instantly ordered that every attention should be given, and, prompted by the inborn sympathy of a woman, she went at once with her friend to where the invalid was.

He had been taken from his carriage and lay stretched upon the turf, pale and inanimate, and covered with blood. His servant, in despair and

weeping, exclaimed that the wound has just reopened and that his master would die.

It was at this instant that Madame de Roselis reached the spot, and hardly had she glanced at the lifeless form when she uttered a sharp cry, and, burying her face in the bosom of her friend, said in a choking voice:

"It is he! he has come to die in my presence!"

"In Heaven's name," whispered Madame de Gernancé, "have courage, take care that you do not betray yourself."

These few words recalled Elinor to her senses; she realized the peril of her situation, and summoning her ebbing strength, she caused the interesting wounded one, who was still unconscious, to be removed to the château.

IX

On opening his eyes, Léon saw that he was in a bed and that near him stood a surgeon, who had just bound up his wound and was bestowing all the necessary care his case required. He questioned his servant, who desired to tell his master briefly what had happened, but the surgeon would not permit this and ordered silence and rest.

Madame de Roselis, who had restlessly awaited news concerning the invalid, learned with deep anxiety that he had been excessively weakened by loss of blood and that should fever set in he could not possibly withstand it. The most absolute quiet was commanded, and it was arranged that the ladies should not enter the chamber, but confine their services to seeing that nothing lacked to the patient's welfare.

The following morning, Elinor rang before daybreak, and learned with terror that fever had been present during the night and that delirium had succeeded it. Astonished at the degree of her grief, Elinor now realized how dear Léon was to her, and admitted to herself that she could not be happy without him; no more pride, no more useless prejudices; a single thought,—the danger of his condition,—filled her soul. Madame de Gernancé, always fearful less

Elinor's emotion should betray her, had great difficulty all that day in keeping her out of the patient's chamber; but during the night when everyone was abed, when that solemn silence reigned that seemed to give added strength to pains and make fears more intolerable, Elinor, alone and sleepless, and unable to endure her anxiety, rose, stepped out into the corridor and stood at Léon's door to listen to what was passing within; he was at that moment delirious and she occasionally caught some of the disjointed utterances that escaped him in a low and trembling voice. Heeding only her grief, she softly opened the door and entered.

The nurse was asleep. By the faint light of the lamp she recognized the lovable face so deeply graved in her memory; but the eyes are set, the countenance is inflamed; the labored breathing painfully lifts the seemingly all too-heavy sheet. Elinor sank into an armchair near the door and buried her face, and her tears, in her hands.

The slight sound she made awakened Léon from a momentary stupor.

"Is it she?" he said. "Will she come?—I am near death—That I might see her at last! Tell her that I am dying—But where is she to be found?—I have lost her—lost her for ever!" For a moment he paused, then resumed: "My daughter, let her be brought to me—When I am dying, can they refuse to let me see my daughter?—Poor child! Do not seek your father—You no longer have one—He could not even bless you in his last moments."

At these words, Elinor broke into sobs. Léon shuddered, and turned his head slightly, but his eyes were still set and he could distinguish nothing.

"What is this mysterious retreat?" he asked. "What do I see on that sofa? It is you,—you I adore—whom I sought—You suffer me at your feet—You rest in my arms—But that mask—take, oh! take, off that mask! What, you would flee again!—No, no, you shall not escape me again." He raised himself with difficulty.

"Léon," cried out Elinor, rushing toward the bed, "Léon, stop!"

He gazed at her with a surprised, uncertain look, then, after a moment's silence, said, in a calmer tone: "How shattered I am! raise my head. If I could only sleep!"

The nurse, who had heard the outcry of Madame de Roselis, approached to support Léon, but he turned aside, and letting his head droop on Elinor's bosom, he fell into a peaceful slumber that seemed to control all his senses.

A moment or two later, Madame de Gernancé entered the chamber, anxious as to her friend. She had risen before daybreak, and surprised at not finding her in her apartment, she ran to the sick man's chamber, where, startled at the scene presented, she stopped suddenly near the door. Léon was asleep, supported on Elinor's shoulder, she was seated on the edge of the bed, motionless, her head resting on that of her lover, and she was vainly struggling to check her tears.

Madame de Gernancé approached the bed and whispered:

"Elinor, what are you doing here? What an imprudent act!"

"Leave me," her friend earnestly answered; "nothing shall tear me from this bedside until this unfortunate man is dead or out of danger—Let it be known that I love him, that I am his; that is a fitting retribution for my sin—If only he may live! What signifies all besides!"

The fear of awakening the invalid enforced silence on both, and Léon's sleep continued placid and deep. He had slept for several hours when, half-parting his lids, his glance rested on the trembling Elinor, who tried to lay him gently on the pillow. He closed his eyes again, but almost immediately reopened them, and in a very feeble voice asked: "Where am I?"

On discovering that he was in the arms of a woman whose appearance indicated that she was not an ordinary nurse, he made an effort to aid her in relieving herself of her burden; his glance, which no longer betokened a wandering mind, but expressed surprise and uncertainty, followed Elinor as she passed behind a curtain in an effort to conceal herself.

"Is it a dream?" he continued with difficulty. "Those features,—I have seen them. Ah! madame, can I believe—"

"He recognizes me," she exclaimed, affrighted, and coloring deeply.

"Once, I think, at Madame de B . . . . 's, but once is enough to impress them on the memory for ever." He fixed his large, languishing eyes on her again.

"Be still! be still! Stop talking. The strictest silence is ordered. Keep silent; don't even think; sleep and hope."

The doctor arrived soon after; he announced that the long sleep had prodouced the most favorable results, that the fever had subsided, and that if the attack were not renewed during the coming night, the patient might be deemed out of danger.

As these comforting words were spoken, they sank deep into Elinor's heart, she hardly breathed as she listened; her joy was beyond control and communicated a delicious tint to her clammy and pallid cheeks.

When evening came, she allowed nothing to keep her from occupying a corner of Léon's chamber, so that she might be by in case the much-dreaded fever returned; but it did not, the night passed most favorably and in the morning the doctor reported that the crisis had passed; but he deemed it his duty to warn Madame de Roselis that convalescence would be slow; that there would be great risk in removing the patient before the wound was thoroughly closed.

Striving to evince only a calm compassion, Elinor trembled with delight at the thought of the protracted interval during which she would give herself, in tender intimacy, wholly to the care of Léon, and finally restore him to happiness, after restoring him to life.

Soon he was desirous of testifying his gratitude to the agreeable chatelaine whom he supposed he had seen but once, but whose beauty, indulgence, and tenderness were deeply impressed on his memory.

The two friends seldom left his room; they entertained him, sometimes rendering some low, soft music, sometimes reading to him; it was another Bayard cared for by two sisters; it was even better than that; Elinor was ever watchful, foresaw and anticipated his wishes, understood exactly the most comfortable position for him, and surrounded him with a thousand little comforts that are easily appreciated without being especially noticed.

Then Léon told them how, having been dangerously wounded in a deadly battle in Spain and left on the field, a woman, moved to pity by his youth and plight, had rescued him from certain death by taking him into her own house and nursing him with the most untiring care. He was well on the way to health when a guerrilla band compelled him to hurry away from his benefactress in order to avoid capture at their hands. When he reached Bayonne, after escaping many perils, he was too impatient to allow time for a complete cure there, and the fatigue of the journey finally brought about the mishap to which he owed so unbounded a hospitality. Such was his story and Elinor then comprehended the long period of uncertainty concerning his fate.

X

The little Léonie was the only person who regretted the arrival of this new guest; she was studiously kept out of the sick room, in which her mirth would have proved too boisterous. Elinor felt a sort of shame in showing her to Léon, as if suspecting the interest she must feel in him; but accustomed to be with her mother constantly, she sought her continually. Finding the door of Léon's room ajar one day, she gently pushed it open and thrust her head within; her glance, timid and curious at once, rested upon the stranger, whom she did not yet know. Léon saw her first and exclaimed in a tone of surprise: "Who is that charming child?"

She had already run away, but her mother, her heart beating with unwonted rapidity and her brow flushed crimson, called her back, took her up and placed her on Léon's knee. Stirred by his memories and by unfamiliar sensations, he gazed upon her lovingly and kissed her time after time. Then in a deeply agitated voice he asked how old she was.

Painfully embarrassed, and fearful that she was already suspected, her mother added a year to her true age.

"I should have said that she was younger," replied Léon. Then he fell to musing.

The child forgot her fears and refused to leave the knee of her new friend, nor could he find heart to put her down.

"I must part you," said Elinor, smiling, "for the excitement I see you suffer will cause me to regret having brought her."

"Ah! madame, if you only knew all that she recalls to me!"

"Why, in assuming you to be the hero of a certain interesting anecdote, I can readily surmise."

"Well, yes, madame, it is I, deceived, cast off by her who seemed to have made choice of me, faithful, in spite of myself, to her memory, who grieve for a shadow, pursue a vain chimera, I who could not die and cannot live happy."

Elinor with difficulty restrained her tears, but she timidly asked: "Do you still love her, then?"

"I do not know if I love her, if I am weak enough to love her still; but her sweet discourse, the moments I have spent beside her, her charms and even her caprices,—all are deeply cut into my memory; she has withered my soul, disenchanted my life."

"So wonderful a constancy ought to be rewarded," said Elinor, in a more affectionate tone. "Do you think that some day she may soften, feel submissive in her turn, and make reparation for her ill-doing and merit forgiveness?"

"Never!" For three years this proud, unfeeling woman has not vouchsafed me a reminiscent word.

She has doubtless returned to her own country, India or America, how do I know? She glories in her triumph now and laughs at my credulity—Ah! that I might forget her! For some time I have thought that it might be possible, and perhaps," he added in a still more impressive tone, "it could not happen too soon."

"You will forget her, Léon." She said this so gently reproachfully that Léon looked at her; he saw that tears glistened in her eyes.

"Oh! madame," he added, after a moment's silence, "how dear to me is that sympathy. Would that she had your soul, your touching sensibility!—I should be happy now—My daughter, pretty, perhaps, like this one, would, like her, be on my knee." Then glancing upward tenderly to Elinor, he added: "Her mother beside me—tender, also."

"These recollections and emotions are not good for you," said Elinor, trembling, as she took her daughter from him; "assuredly, I must part you."

"Pardon me, madame, I was dreaming for a moment, why awaken me so soon?"

Not trusting herself to hear more, Elinor hurried from the room with her child, eager to relate the conversation to Madame de Gernancé.

From that hour, the little Léonie was as constant as her mother, in bearing the convalescent company; he unceasingly demanded her. He grew passionately fond of her. She called him her friend, lavished caresses on him, desired to be always between him and her mother; her innocent affection for both often

gave rise to embarrassing scenes, though for Elinor they were joys; but Léon always felt sadder and more pensive after them.

Meanwhile, his health grew visibly better; the wound was healing splendidly; time, which travels swiftly during the happy moments of a growing intimacy, had already brought the month of December.

Madame de Gernancé had been talking some time of her departure; now she intimated that she could not defer it any longer; and Léon, betraying in the altered tone of his voice the effort it cost him, unexpectedly requested permission to accompany her. This abrupt decision surprised Madame de Roselis and she strove to overcome it.

"Ah! madame," Léon earnestly replied, "let me go; I have already too long enjoyed a happiness which is not for me; let me escape from your presence and that of this child,—from your alluring attentions, from these all too brief days; let me regain the solitude that must for ever be my lot."

"But it is essential that we should learn from the doctor if you can, without risk—"

"There are dangers against which neither the doctor nor all his art can protect me—My destiny is to flee from all that is attractive, all that is capable of creating attachments and pleasure—I cannot too soon get away from this place."

"In that case, my dear," Elinor said, turning toward her friend, "I shall have to entrust to your care my wounded cavalier; but you will be answerable to me for him."

Léon, who was perhaps somewhat taken aback on receiving this permission so readily, left the room to give instructions as to his departure. Elinor looked after him, smiling.

"Will you explain to me," said Madame de Gernancé, annoyed as she observed this,—"Will you explain this new comedy? It is patent that he is afraid he will love you, therefore he is going away. What then are you waiting for before making yourself known and putting an end to this overlong extravagance? Do you find pleasure in this new method of torturing him?"

"Ah! my dear, it is delicious to be my own rival, to attract him twice under conditions so different! He is faithful to me even in his inconstancy; always delicate, scrupulously honorable, he flies from me so that he may not betray me; he has loved me; he loves only me; how happy I am!"

"And Léon, poor Léon! when do you propose to concern yourself about his happiness? Make yourself known, Elinor, and let us leave together for Paris, where you can make a union, which I believe, will no longer have terrors for you."

"No, my plan is decided on; you go with him, I will follow you shortly."

"Elinor, Elinor, what! more romance, more imagination!"

"Just this one time, my dear! This will be the last, I swear to you."

Léon returned at this moment; he was greatly agitated, deeply affected; all was ready for his departure.

Madame de Gernancé, although greatly annoyed, was compelled to submit to her friend's plan, and arranged for her own going; but at the moment of parting everyone's courage failed. Elinor, in tears, commended her convalescent to the care of Madame de Gernancé, who promised to lodge him in her own home and continue to watch over him. Léon, very pale and serious, stood by the carriage repeating his gratefulness in a tone that usually betokens a stronger sentiment; he stepped aside and once more took up the child, who broke into tears as she saw her friend about to depart.

Madame de Gernancé drew close to Elinor and whispered: "There is yet time." A moment of hesitation and Elinor answered:

"No, there is only one way in which I can make that difficult avowal."

Thereupon, Madame de Gernancé drew Léon away and seated him with her in the carriage, which started immediately and was soon lost to view.

XI

In solitude again, Elinor realized that it had become unbearable; the happiness that she had just tasted would henceforward give her heart the only satisfaction it could ever know. Her only thought was to rejoin as quickly as possible her friend and him she already regarded as her husband.

Eight days after they had left, she arrived secretly with her daughter at her Paris mansion. Only Madame de Gernancé had been advised of this visit.

In the course of a lengthy conversation, Elinor unfolded her romantic plan of making herself known to Léon and obtained her friend's consent to help her in carrying out the details, which delighted her, and they parted in full agreement as to what must be done.

The balls at the Opera had just begun, and Madame de Gernancé begged Léon to accompany her there one evening; at first he most decidedly refused and with such vehemence that she was surprised. That place where he had been weak enough to entangle himself in an intrigue that was to control his whole life had become detestable to him; he had vowed he would never enter it again. But Madame

de Gernancé persisted; she requested his escort only till she should meet a stranger who was to be there, and whom she promised to mystify. Unable to refuse anything to this friend of Madame de Roselis, Léon finally consented, but very reluctantly; they set out.

As they entered the hall he was greatly perturbed; a thousand memories surged in his mind. Madame de Gernancé made the tour of the place several times before she suddenly pretended to see the person she sought; thereupon, she released him with an adieu. Hardly had she yielded his arm when a voice which, in spite of the hubbub of the ball, made him quiver, uttered close to him:

"Ah! unfaithful one, I have caught you; so it is not me whom you seek at the Opera ball?"

He turned around and found beside him—who?—his unknown herself. The white domino, the mask, even the diamond clasp that held her girdle, that he had formerly noted, all were the same.

"It is she, "he quickly exclaimed, seizing her arm and placing it within his own. "What! I have found you once more?—I see you, I hold you. What inconceivable chance has done this?"

"Is so much surprise warranted? You know my skill in performing the unusual—"

"Indeed, I have known nothing else of you," he interrupted.

"What has been done is as nothing; you are about to learn something quite different: now that you have fallen into my hands again, you may look for the

most extraordinary happenings. Your lot is decided, your destiny is about to be fulfilled."

As she proceeded with her remarks, the first impulse of joy which her presence had caused soon gave place to a feeling of anger. Her trifling yet imperious air in view of her obligation to atone for three years of neglect, and for many other wrongs, wounded him deeply; all the unfavorable opinions he had entertained of her during that time now crowded in his mind. He stopped suddenly, and enquired:

"Well, madame, what do you desire of me? What new scene are you staging? What further means of deceiving me?"

"How greatly a man can alter in three years! Is this the affectionate, gentle, earnest Léon who in this very place ardently vowed to be constant and absolutely submissive?"

"If I am changed, who is to blame, heartless woman? Is it not yourself who spurned my constancy, you, who have deceived me, repulsed me without remorse or pity, after having won me. You, who for three years abandoned me to grief and oblivion?"

"Léon you are too severe. I am beside you; I am come to restore to you her for whom you pine!"

"What is that! What confidence can I place in your words? In an instant perhaps, you will vanish from my sight, leaving me no other trace than the harm you do me; perhaps you are planning another trick—"

She interrupted him and said affectionately: "No more tricks, no more secrets—Ah! Léon, I, too, have suffered—But let us forget the madness, the torture of the past. Know, accept, your wife—"

"This you wished not to be—"

"That is true, I was at fault; but I have learned to return your love—"

"You scorned that pure, lasting love when my heart was able to tender it. What new caprice urges you to ask it now? Are you sure it is still to be had? Am I under obligation to an unseen being who abandoned me? Who has told you that I am unchanged, that on my side I would not reject that bond which was odious to you, that I would not cherish my liberty, also? It would not cost me so dear as you."

These bitter words entered into the depths of Elinor's soul. The cheerfulness, the sweet hopes that she brought to the ball vanished. Humiliated, convinced of the exact justice of his unlooked-for reproaches, her courage and strength completely failed her. Léon perceived that she could hardly stand and led her to an isolated bench and sat down beside her. Happily, tears came to relieve her burden of sorrow.

"Oh! forgive me," Léon resumed, moved by the evidence of her genuine grief; "forgive me, you whom I cannot fathom. I hate myself for my untimely severity. But, after so many tokens of indifference, how could I expect to find you sensible?"

At the same time, he urged her to remove her mask, to permit him to take her home; for a moment she was tempted to acquiesce and disclose her features, which would disarm him instantly; but the dread of a scene that would draw the attention of everyone to them and the desire to make a further trial of him still restrained her. She drew her hood over her eyes, and disguising her voice still more, she said sadly:

"No; take me home? the hour is ill-suited, and you have taught me prudence. Remove my mask? Why should you know her you cannot love? I see what has caused your coldness. I know where you passed the time of your convalescence and whose hands ministered to your needs."

"Well, madame," replied Léon seriously, "then you know that my gratitude could not be too warm—my admiration too intense. Yes, I do not deny it. During three months of most happy intimacy, the object of the devoted cares of a woman whose beauty is her least merit, of a sympathetic, sensible woman, who to the modest dignity of her sex adds that touching goodness and kindness that embellish it so richly, could I fail to appreciate so many lovable qualities? How can I do other than preserve this recollection for ever?"

Elinor's joy was complete as she listened, but she realized that in a moment more she would betray herself, in spite of all effort, so she rose abruptly, saying:

"Be happy; your happiness shall be mine—I will speak to you no more of myself—I demand nothing,

you are free—But you no doubt long to see your daughter?"

"Long! you cannot doubt it—"

"Well, come to-morrow morning to take lunch with me, you shall see her." She then indicated her residence, but withheld her name. "My servants will be notified," she added, "they will admit you."

She then hurried away, deeply moved by what had taken place.

"What would have been my case? What would have been my case?" she repeated in terror, "if chance had not given me the opportunity of gaining under another personality his esteem and love?"

XII

Léon passed the night in extraordinary agitation. He had at last found the object of his many anxieties and the cause of his prolonged sorrow. He was about to know her. He would see his child—his daughter, whose image he had so often striven to trace. Now for a certainty, he would no longer be refused as husband, as father. These precious longed-for titles he was about to possess. Such were his thoughts. Nevertheless, the memory of Madame de Roselis would obtrude itself in the centre of his picture, and the comparison he drew did not favor the unknown. What woman could, in his eyes, match Elinor?

The next morning he was at the rendezvous appointed at the exact time set, and the first person that attracted his attention was the negro who was so closely connected with so many of his souvenirs. He was led by him through sumptuous apartments to a door which he opened and then announced M. de Préval.

Léon stepped forward and found himself in a boudoir that instantly recalled that other which the lapse of years could not banish from his memory: in the same attitude, extended on a sofa, a woman,

dressed in the same fashion, made the illusion complete. She held a child on her lap. As Léon approached, she turned toward him.

"Whom do I see?" he exclaimed. "Elinor! Can so great a happiness be possible! Ah! if it be a cruel play, have done with it, or I shall die here before you."

At that moment, little Léonie ran to him and threw herself into his arms, and pointing to the second section of the ring suspended about her neck, said with childish grace: "My friend Léon, will you mend my ring?"

He examined it, then uttered a cry, and overwhelmed with surprise and joy, was compelled to sit down, repeating in low tones: "Elinor—My daughter!"

Elinor was already at his side; he put one arm about her and with the other held their child upon his knee; they gazed at each other and their tears escaped simultaneously and mingled as they fell; they could find no words to express their feelings. After awhile, Elinor, gently resting her face on her lover's shoulder, said:

"Yes, this is your daughter; and your unknown, your friend, your watchful nurse, who, under these many aspects has always been interested in you, henceforth desires to be only her mother and your wife. Forgive me, Léon, forgive me for the trials to which I have subjected you; forgive a reprehensible folly for which I also have suffered; it was the first, it shall be the last; the proud, indifferent unknown

received a salutary lesson last night at the ball, which your companion will never forget."

"Ah! I crave your forgiveness, also," exclaimed Léon. "My love, my child, the beloved objects of my many anxieties, for whom I have borne so much grief, how completely will my heart be devoted to filling the void of those three years that have been stolen from my affection!"

At that moment Madame de Gernancé arrived, and her warm friendship enabled her to share in the joys of the happy pair. But ever prudent and reflective, she said to her friend:

"Confess, Elinor, that you might have found this happy result without straying from the path marked by duty and the social laws and have spared both of you three years of sorrow."

"Never mention it again," rejoined Madame de Roselis, embracing her; "my friends, we will never speak of it again. I am now thoroughly convinced that it is only at the price of her happiness that a woman strives to escape from the harsh restrictions that are imposed upon her sex."

THE END

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